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JACK HOPETON;

OR,

The Adventures of a Georgian.

BY WM. W. TURNER,

OF PUTNAM CO., GEORGIA.

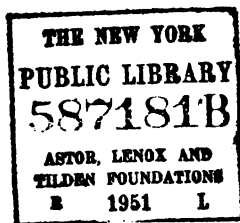


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JACK HOPETON;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A GEORGIAN.

Chapter First.

CHARLEY HAMPTON—although I designate him thus familiarly—was about as old as my father, but still a bachelor. I give the name by which he was known throughout fashionable and sporting circles. I always called him Uncle Charley, although there was no relationship existing between us, except the strong tie of friendship which bound him and “Hal,” as he called my parent.

In matters of dress, equipage, furniture, &c., his taste was exquisite. No one was a better judge of horse, dog, and gun. To the world he seemed the mere man of pleasure and fashion—the butterfly of society—handsome, accomplished, highly gifted, but without solid or sterling qualities. He appeared to most people perfectly heartless, and indifferent to all the deeper and finer feelings of our nature.

My father, however, had seen through the mask

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which Mr. Hampton chose to wear. He had explored the inmost recesses of Uncle Charley's heart, and found there a mine of good qualities of which the world did not dream. Never would he have chosen Charley Hampton for a friend, or recommended me to his friendship and tutelage, had he not known that beneath that gay, careless, and apparently selfish exterior of the man of the world, there beat as true and warm a heart as ever throbbed in human breast.

Sometimes Uncle Charley was at our house, when other guests were present, and at such times he always wore his society face. Again he would visit us when no one was at Hopeton besides my parents and myself. Then he was entirely different. A perfect *abandon*, in which he seemed actually to revel, characterized all his actions.

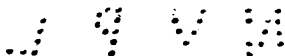
He was a great favorite with such of our negroes as were anything like *characters*, and many were the jests which they had with each other.

Uncle Charley was paying us a long visit in the spring.

"Charley," said my father to him one day, "fine gentleman as you are, I know you have an eye for good crops. Suppose I order our horses, and we take a ride through my fields? I think I can show you something that will please you."

"I'm agreeable," was the reply.

"As you always are, my dear friend," answered my father.



"Jack," he continued, turning to me, "have the horses brought out—one for yourself, if you wish—and let's ride."

The horses were quickly saddled, and we mounted. We passed to the rear of the house, through the negro quarter, and then through a gate, opened by an obsequious little darkey.

"Howdy, Marse Charley!" called out the ebo, grinning and scraping his foot on the ground.

"Why, Cumbo," said Uncle Charley, "you little serpent, how are you?"

"Toluble well, I thank you; how you do yourself?"

"Oh! my health is very good. Well, Cumbo, you grow uglier—I must buy and carry you around for a show."

"Marse won't sell me," answered Cumbo, still grinning, imagining that a great compliment had been paid him. "Marse can't do without me," he added.

"Ah! Why, what use has he for you?"

"I opens de gate for him to go frough."

"Well, couldn't Dick, or Toin, or any of this crowd of little blackies do that?"

"Dey aint krite so swift es I is."

"Well, perhaps not—here is a dime for you any way."

We were presently riding through an immense, gently-undulating field. On both sides of the well-beaten road along which we proceeded, stretched the

long, straight rows of young cotton, away almost as far as the eye could reach. In one part of the field was a squad of ploughs, drawn by strong, well-fed mules, and held by stout, sleek-looking negroes. The ploughs were light sweeps, which stirred the rich soil and shaved the grass close to the cotton. On came the hands with a rush and a shout, near to where we were riding, and a universal touching of hats and grins of recognition greeted "Marse Charley."

Passing on, we came in sight of the hoe hands. They were following the others at a rapid pace, clipping, with easy strokes, the few weeds and sprigs of grass which were left by the ploughs. Foremost in this squad was a negro who, in appearance, was a perfect curiosity. He was of gigantic size, with immense and well-formed arms and shoulders, but with knock-kneed, awkwardly-shaped legs. It was easy to see, from the way in which he wielded his hoe, that he was possessed of great strength. His huge, ugly face wore an expression of the most supreme self-satisfaction, which amounted to disdain, as he occasionally looked back and addressed some hand lagging behind. A slight sprinkling of gray was perceptible in the thick hair which protruded from under the slouched wool-hat.

"Harry," said Uncle Charley, as we approached the hoe hands, "I must talk a little with my old friend Juba."

"Very well," answered my father, "you shall be gratified."

"Sarvent, Marse Charley," said Juba, doffing his hat and making a low bow, as he passed us.

The salutation over, he again struck out with his hoe.

"Hold on, Juba," said his master, "Marse Charley wishes very much to have a conversation with you."

An expression of deep respect and good humor had taken the place of Juba's supercilious look, as soon as we had appeared in sight. With all his arrogance toward "lazy, no-count niggers," as he termed them, to his master, his master's family and friends, he was loyal and true as steel.

"I'm mighty glad to see you, Marse Charley," he said, taking off his hat and making another profound bow. "You look mighty well. How is your health, any how?"

"Excellent! old infidel! excellent! I have a clear conscience, take plenty of exercise, and live temperately; so you see there is nothing to make me sick. But how is your own health?"

"I'm jest as well as a nigger can be. I gits a plenty to eat, and wear, and chaw, and ain't got no wife and children to bother me, Marse Charley," continued Juba, in a most innocent tone. "Ain't you married yet?"

"Not yet, Juba."

"Well, it's time for you to be. You'll be gittin' sorter old after awhile, and the young gals won't have nutthin' to do with you."

"Oh, there's plenty of time yet, Juba. You know I can marry any time I please."

"No, sir—axin' your pardon—I *don't* know no sich thing; 'cause ef you could git married so easy you'd do it."

"Well, suppose I admit what you say to be true, Juba; it follows that your case is much worse than mine. You have been courting all your life, and after being kicked till your shins are sore, first by the girls, then by the middle-aged women, and, lastly, by all the toothless *old* women in the neighborhood—you are an ugly, miserable, cross-grained old bachelor yet."

"Nuver tried to git married in all my born days, so help me God!" was Juba's energetic response.

"Tell that to those who don't know you," said Uncle Charley. "You can't fool me."

"Dat gal ain't livin' dat I'd have."

"*Gal!* What do you want with a *gal*? Where is one that would look at you? You want an old woman—old as yourself."

"Lord! Marse Charley, what *is* you talkin' about? I marry an old 'oman! Ef I court anybody, it'll be a nice young gal."

"You sly old rascal!" here interposed my father. "You didn't know I had heard from you? Jones and Scip have been telling me of your desperate flirtations with old Dilsey. You went with her to meeting regularly for two months; you, who never would set foot inside of a church until very lately.

You needn't look so wild about it. I've had a full account of your *carrying-on*. And the worst of it all, Charley, is that old Dilsey, after encouraging the youthful swain till he was induced to pop the question, told him, flatly, that he was too *wicked*, and *old*, and —— *ugly*, for her to think of marrying him."

It is impossible to describe the appearance presented by Juba, during this recital. Respect for his master could hardly prevent him from breaking in upon the narrative. He writhed about and turned up the whites of his eyes, spasmodically.

"Master!" he exclaimed, raising his hand high in the air, as the tale was brought to a close. "Master! ef Scip says all this, he tells a most *onaccountable*, *outdacious*, *ongodly lie*! Old Dilsey's old enough to be my mammy, and ain't got 'nary whole tooth in her head—jest some old yaller stumps and snags. But, nuver mind, I'll get Scip fur it."

"Let's ride on, Charley," said my father. "This old chap will burst if we tease him much more."

"Good-by, old bachelor," said Uncle Charley, as we moved on. "I wish you better luck with the women, next time."

"The best luck I can have is to keep clear of 'um," was the growling reply.

"No doubt of it," said I, "especially if they are all as cross as old Aunt Dilsey."

"Ah! you're young yet, but you'll find 'um out, one of these days."

And Juba commenced on the grass as if determined

to be revenged on it for the quizzing he had received from us.

"What do you think of this cotton, Charley?" asked my father, as we continued our ride.

"I think you may well be proud of the field. It promises finely now, but I need not remind you of the uncertainty of the cotton crop."

"Of course not."

"But will your crop average as good as this?"

"Hardly. Jones thinks it will, but he is a little mistaken. He does not miss it very far, though. I'll take you to see the rest of it to-morrow, or some other day, before you go. But see that low ground corn there. Ride up here on this little eminence, and you can have a better view of it."

"This is fine, Harry," exclaimed Uncle Charley, as he gazed on the broad expanse of rank, waving growth, spread out in the valley below us.

"Yes," said my father, after enjoying his friend's admiration for a few moments. "It is good corn. I've seen a few acres, frequently, that would yield larger proportional crops than this, but I've seldom seen a field of the same size which would measure out more per acre."

"How much do you expect to gather here?"

"Well, Jones says fifty bushels per acre, but Juba says we won't make more than forty-eight."

And I'll bet old Juba's calculation will come nearer the true one than Jones'."

"I agree with you," was the reply, as we turned our horses' heads homeward.

Chapter Second.

MY father was a well-educated man, and took so much pains with me, that I was prepared to enter college at an early age. He was casting about a long while, in his own mind, as to where he should send me. At one time he thought of entering me at West Point. I very candidly told him that I was afraid the discipline was too strict to suit me.

"That is the very idea," he would say. "It will make something of you besides a mere nice young man. I believe in elegance and refinement, as you are well aware. I am willing, nay anxious, that you should be accomplished, as the lessons I allow you to receive from Charley Hampton bear me witness; but, besides, I want you to learn a little of the rough side of life, before you are cast loose upon the world."

"That is just what I want myself, father," was my reply. "I don't want to go to West Point; but I want to take a rough and tumble trip out West, before I enter any college whatever."

"Hello, youngster! What wild notion is this? Take a trip out West before you go through college? Why, it will drive out all idea of study from your brain."

"I think not. It will give me a fine stock of health and vigor, to support me through my course."

"How do you expect to go—and when—and with whom?"

"I have not yet settled the plan in my own mind. I thought it best to get your permission before allowing myself to dwell on the details."

"Well, I must have time to think on the matter. At present it does not strike me very favorably."

So, for the time, the subject was dropped. About this period, too, some circumstances of a rather serious nature occurred, which postponed my departure from home. Ours was a peaceable neighborhood generally, and those living in it were wealthy, enlightened and well-behaved. On one side of us, though, lived some people of a rather worse class than our immediate neighbors. Our plantation was very irregular in its form, and one corner of it—the farthest—joined the land of a man named Warlock.

Old John Warlock and his two sons bought the plantation on which they then lived, a few years before the time of which I write. They brought with them to the country a good many negroes, together with a considerable sum of money, and commenced the erection of a large, rambling house. When this was about half finished, they suddenly dismissed their carpenters, hired a crack overseer, put the plantation in his charge, and commenced a course of regular sporting. At first they were admitted into the society of all who were fond of amusement. The people around them were sociable and hospitable.

Whenever the Warlocks had visitors at their house, or visited the houses of others, they were sure to propose a little poker, seven-up, or something else to

amuse the company; and somehow they generally managed to win considerable sums. For a good while they had rich pickings; but at length it began to be suspected that they were swindlers. Some ill-natured people asserted that they were sleight-of-hand men, and could make a Jack come up whenever they chose. Whether this was so or not, they were, at least, wretchedly dissipated; and this, coupled with their invariably good luck at cards, made the gentlemanly portion of the community avoid them.

People now began to inquire into their antecedents, as they ought to have done at first. It was whispered about that their real name was not Warlock, and that they had fled from justice, which threatened them for forgery or murder, or both. How this rumor originated no one could say, and it was not substantiated; but its existence, together with what was already known of their character, rendered them odious in the eyes of most of their neighbors.

My father had but little to do with these men, even in the beginning, as he seemed to have an instinctive knowledge of their character. After they were fully unmasked, he, in common with the other gentlemen of the neighborhood, ceased to exchange visits with them. It must be confessed that my father was rather uncompromising in his disposition—perhaps too much so—and he took less pains than almost any one else to conceal the utter contempt he felt for the swindlers. At any rate, they conceived a great dislike for him. They were perfect bullies, and induced

many people to believe that they were recklessly brave. This caused our friends to fear that my father would some day suffer something at their hands. Others knew that if the desperadoes ever sought a difficulty with him, he would make them rue it.

One night, soon after the conversation about my Western trip, the Warlocks started out, drunk, patrolling. They had no commissions, but went, as they said, "for the fun of it." Among other plantations, they visited ours. They rode up to the negro quarter, which was some distance from the dwelling, shouting and swearing. Going into the cabins, they found no negroes but those belonging to the plantation. Disappointed, they began to threaten and bully these. Finally they became so violent, that the noise reached the ears of my father, who was then talking with Juba about the stock, of which the latter had the charge. Listening a moment, he asked of Juba the cause of all that noise.

"It must be dem drunken vagabones, Jake and Joe Warlock, and de ole man," answered Juba. "Dey always after some *devilment*."

"Have they ever been here before?"

"No, sir. Dey been to plantations whar de black folks' master live in town, but dey never was here before. Fools for coming now, too!" he added, *sotto voce*, as he saw his master seize a double-barrelled gun and hasten out.

As my father started, he met Jones, the overseer, who had also heard the noise, and was coming by

in haste for his employer. I had got wind of the matter, and came out. We ran to the cabin where the row was going on, and reached it just as Jake Warlock had seized an old gray-headed negro, and was flourishing a whip over him, with the most fearful imprecations. Without waiting to see whether Jake would strike or not, my father sprang forward, and with a blow from a stout hickory stick which he carried, besides the gun, laid the ruffian bleeding and senseless on the floor. So sudden was this act, that the first intimation the drunken crowd had of our presence was the fall of their comrade. Recovering a little from their astonishment, they started to make a rush upon us. We cocked our guns, and this caused a halt.

"You cowardly scoundrels," said my father, "what business have you here?"

"We are patrolling," was the reply.

"I am perfectly willing that patrolling should be carried out effectually, by proper men, in a proper way. You see there are no negroes here but my own, and you were about to flog one of them. Besides, you are disturbing my family, with your bawling. I don't go on your plantation to disturb its peace, and I will not permit you to come on mine. Now, let me give you fair warning. Never set your foot on my premises again. I want to have nothing farther to do with you; and mark me—if you ever try over the game of to-night, I'll shoot you like dogs."

Our determined front overawed them, and, in company with their stricken companion, who had recovered his feet, they marched off rather more quietly than they had come up.

Not long after this adventure, I was riding with my father over the plantation, and we came to where Jones was overlooking some of the hands.

"Mr. Hopeton," said Jones, "some of the best low-ground corn is badly injured."

"How was it done?"

"It was trampled down by Mr. Warlock's cattle."

"Isn't the fence around the corn a good one?"

"First-rate; but there are not many fences which will turn an old steer of Warlock's, that stays on the creek swamp."

"Well, it is strange that people will allow mischievous stock to go at large."

"I don't much think this steer will trouble us any more, if Juba tells the truth about the matter."

"Why, the old fool hasn't killed him, has he?"

"No, sir."

"What, then? I have always given strict orders that when my neighbors' stock break into my fields, they shall be sent home, and the owners informed of it."

"Well, I did this, the first time the mischievous old brute got in the corn, and the second time, too, which was last Saturday. On Sunday, Nep was down on the creek fishing—a rascal!—and he saw this steer, with many other cattle, trampling on the

corn. I was gone to see Mr. Hill, who is very sick, so Nep came to the house and told Juba—Juba got those ugly curs of his, with two or three of the boys, and put out for the low-ground. There he dogged the cattle till he was tired, and at last got the old scamp that broke the fence in a corner, where the boys held him by the horns and tail, while Juba cut a good-sized sapling, and beat him till he could hardly stand. When the steer was turned loose, he struck a bee-line for home, and hasn't been back since."

"Well, I am sorry it happened, but still Juba acted perfectly right."

"I am sorry for it myself," said Jones, "for I am afraid Juba has got himself into a scrape."

"What sort of a scrape?"

"Why, I understand that the Warlocks swear if they ever catch Juba off of your plantation, they will skin him. They've had enough of coming here, it seems."

"These men are the pests of the community, and if they are as troublesome to every one as they have proved to me, I should think the neighbors would all agree with me that they ought to be driven off. Well," continued my father, while his thin lips became white and quivering—a sure sign of deadly rage with him—"Let them dare to lay a hand on Juba for this cause, and they will wish they had never been born."

I saw that trouble was brewing.

"Father," said I, as we rode off, "I had rather not leave home till this matter is settled with the Warlocks. I acknowledge that I am somewhat uneasy for you."

"You need not be," was the reply. "They are cowardly dogs."

"I grant that. They may not attack you openly; if they would, my uneasiness would be less. What I fear is, that they may try to do you a secret injury—I hardly know what. They are not men to hesitate at anything—perfect assassins in spirit, and ready to become so, in deed. You have heard the reports already in circulation as to their former crimes."

"Oh, yes; but they will hardly venture on an assassination here. And this reminds me—I've concluded to let you take that trip out West—and you won't have time to stay at home much longer, if you go before commencing your college course."

"Then I'll forego my project, and would forego almost any other, rather than leave you at this time."

Chapter Third.

I HEARD of several threats made by the Warlocks, and was rendered very uncomfortable by them. My father tried to persuade me that my fears were groundless, but I insisted that he should go armed. He did not require much persuasion, as he well knew that a good repeater, carried in his pocket, could do no harm, and might preserve his life.

One day we rode to a distant part of the county, and had to pass by old Warlock's house. In going we saw no one; but coming back we perceived a table in the piazza, and around it Jake and Joe Warlock, their father, and several congenial spirits, indulging in cards and brandy. From one of the men present we afterward heard that the following conversation took place as we rode toward the house.

"Boys," exclaimed the old man, "yonder comes the scoundrel who has been in my way and yours so long. I've got just enough of liquor in me now to do anything. If you are not up to the mark, swallow a tumbler of brandy, and that will set you right."

"Men," he continued, turning toward his guests, "are you going to stand by us, or are you such cowards as to be afraid of this aristocrat?"

"Why, we ain't afraid," said one, "but we'd rather not have a *fuss*. And, besides, Mr. Hopeton is a very

clever man, if he *is* aristocratic. Many's the kind act he does for the poor people round here."

"Yes," said another, "last summer, when so many of my folks were sick, he sent over a dozen ploughs and hoes, and helped me out of the grass."

"You lying cowards!" broke out the violent host; "you are afraid. Jake," he said, turning to his sons, "are you and Joe ready?"

Some little reluctance displayed itself in their faces.

"If you don't revenge yourselves now," he shouted, "for the beating you got, I'll turn you off, you whelps!"

"Oh!" said Jake, "I wonder if you didn't stand by and see me knocked down, without raising a finger to help me."

"And you had better not talk about turning us off," said Joe; "for if you do, I'll turn state's evidence, and let a cat out of the bag which would scratch rather badly."

At this the old man turned pale, and Joe added:

"But it would be foolish in us to quarrel. We are as ready to have revenge as anybody; but you'd better not threaten us any more, for we won't stand much of that game."

"All right, boys," said the father, brought to his senses. "I was wrong."

"But," said he, turning once more to his visitors, "are *you* going to help us out?"

"No," answered a small, hard, wiry-looking man,

much the soberest of the party, "and *you* had better let them alone, for if you happen to kill one of them, we've heard you say enough to make an ugly case in court."

"If ever you turn informer against me, I'll cut your throat!"

Seeing the turn matters were taking, Joe, who was the soberest of the three Warlocks, endeavored to change the face of affairs.

"We don't want to kill Hopeton," said he, winking to his father, "we only want to give him a good beating."

"Well," answered the *wiry* man, "go your own way, but if you don't kill them devilish quick after you commence with them, you'll come off second best."

"Yes," said the man who had received the favor, "I know them well, and they are game to the backbone."

"May-be you intend to help them?" said the old man, an ominous frown gathering on his brow, as he gazed on the last speaker.

Now, gratitude would have required this, on the part of the man, but he was timid, and overawed by the bullies around him.

"I sha'n't interfere either way," said he. "You all must do your own fighting. I intend to keep out of it."

"So do we," said the others.

"Clear out of my house, then, you infernal, un-

grateful, cowardly scoundrels! You are no longer friends of mine!"

"And never were," muttered the men as they left the house.

By this time we had arrived opposite the gate. The three ruffians had come out and planted themselves in the road, so that we could not pass without riding over them. I was very much surprised at their preparing to attack us thus openly, fearing assassination as I had. I was sorry to have a rencontre with such men, but, being convinced that it must come, was glad to have it brought to an issue so soon.

"Well, sir!" asked my father, in a sharp tone, "Why do you stop the road? What will you have?"

"Why," answered one of the party, "we heard that you wanted to flog us, and we thought we'd just give you the chance."

"You lie, you scoundrel! You've heard no such thing. You have done nothing for which I should attack you, since the night you came on my plantation; and I want to have no further dealings with you."

"Come, come, you must mind how you give the lie," said Jake, "or we'll give you a taste of what you gave me the night you had the advantage of us with your double-barrelled gun."

"Yes," said Joe, "we will give you the most unmerciful flogging you ever heard of, if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head."

"Silncee, you insolent puppy!" exclaimed I, placing my hand in my pocket.

"Don't be in a hurry, Jack," said my father, well understanding the movement. "Be calm," he continued, having himself now become perfectly cool.

"I have heard," said he now, in a cold, haughty tone, to the drunken wretches before us, "that you intend flogging one of my negroes for simply obeying my orders. I also understand that you have been making threats against myself. So far as they are concerned, I intended paying no attention to them, except by going prepared to defend myself; but I intended seeking an interview with reference to Juba, that I might warn you not to abuse my slave on account of an act for which I alone am responsible."

"But," said the old man, taking my father's moderation and calmness for fear, "you didn't have to *seek* an interview. Here I am ready to give you any satisfaction you want. I *did* say I'd give old Juba a whipping, and I will do it, if it costs me my life."

"Look you, sir; the proper reply to your language would be a cut in the face with this riding whip; but I will not act rashly. What has Juba done, that you should wish to beat him cruelly?"

"Almost killed one of my best steers."

"Wasn't the steer making havoc with my best corn, for the third time?"

"Yes; but what neighbor would let his negroes abuse stock for doing what any of them will do if they get a chance?"

"You, sir, for one; even when your fences are not good. I keep good fences, but no barrier will turn some of your cattle."

"It makes no difference," roared the drunken old fool; "if I don't flog old Juba within an inch of his life, you may cut my ears off; and, if his master interferes, I'll serve him the same way."

My father sat on his horse, considering what course to pursue, still perfectly collected. Seeing this, his foe concluded that he certainly was frightened, and losing all prudence, he rushed forward with a drawn pistol.

"Come on, boys," he shouted, "let's pay them off now. They are armed."

Jake and Joë were rather tardy in their movements, and I, with my repeater in hand, watched them, believing my father to be a match for his antagonist. A quick shot was made, and old Warlock sank to the earth, while in the very act of firing—his ball going under the horse my father rode, and slightly grazing one leg. The sons drew back, and, when we made toward them, fled, leaving their father on the ground. Upon this, we turned to look on the body of our fallen foe.

"This is what I never wished to do," said my father. "It is a hard necessity, but I was forced into it, and it *shall not* make me miserable. But here, Jack, let us raise him."

I complied, and we found, to my great joy, that life was not extinct. We called some of the negroes,

and while they were conveying their master to the house, "saddle your swiftest horse," said my father, "and ride for Dr. Stubbs! Hurry!"

It happened that even this man had one slave who loved him devotedly, and the order was obeyed with a will. We stanchd the blood, flowing from the wound, and placed the unfortunate man on an easy couch, waiting impatiently for the physician. Mr. Warlock called for water, and, after drinking, seemed disposed to talk. We persuaded him to be silent, telling him we had sent for a physician. We had not long to wait. Dr. Stubbs, a most excellent surgeon and general practitioner, soon galloped up, and came into the house. He was a fidgety, curious sort of man, although one of great nerve. He commenced, after surveying the scene before him—

"My dear sir, what does all this mean?"

"Doctor," was the answer, "I shot this man down about half an hour since—that is all."

"What! you don't mean that you killed a man in cold blood, do you?"

"No, sir. I said nothing about 'cold blood.'"

"My dear doctor," said my father, perceiving him to be on the eve of speaking again, "you are examining the wound, I see, but I don't understand how you can do it properly, while talking so much. When you are through with your professional duties, I will satisfy your curiosity."

Dr. Stubbs proceeded, silently, to the examination of the wound. The ball had passed out, and the

painful operation of extracting it was thus avoided. We assisted all we could, and when the dressing was finished.

"Now, Mr. Hopeton," said the doctor, "I do hope you will relieve me of my suspense, by explaining this mysterious affair."

"I will, soon," was the reply, "but you forget that *we* wish to ask a question first. You surely will tell us whether or not this wound is mortal?"

"Mortal? Why no—not exactly—that is, it will not prove so, if the patient can be kept quiet; but if he indulges in his usual fretfulness, his life isn't worth a straw."

"Well," said I, drawing a long breath—for I felt as if a weight had been taken off my breast—"he has been very quiet, so far, and I hope he will remain so."

"But that explanation, Mr. Hopeton? For God's sake, *don't* keep me in suspense any longer."

"We will remove to the piazza, then, if you please."

"I beg you will not leave this room, gentlemen," suddenly exclaimed Mr. Warlock, in a voice so altered from its usual tone that we could hardly recognize it.

"I acknowledge," he continued, "that the act of shooting me was perfectly justifiable, and it gives me satisfaction to confess so much. I will tell you all about it, doctor."

"Don't do it," said the doctor. "*Don't* do it. You must keep quiet. You *must*," he added, seeing the old man raise his head impatiently. "Come, sir,

ou know I never was afraid of you when you were at your worst, and of course I am not now, that I hear you speak like a gentleman and a Christian—for the first time in my life.”

“I think, Mr. Warlock,” said my father soothingly “you had better follow Dr. Stubbs’ directions. Too much excitement might throw you into a dangerous fever.”

“And do you really care enough for me to give me such advice?” asked the thoroughly subdued man.

“Certainly. Do you take me for a heathen?”

“Ah! You will please excuse me for judging you by my own bad heart; I know so well that if I had found you, or one of yours, at death’s door, I would not have lifted a finger to aid you.”

“Name o’ God!” broke in Doctor Stubbs, “are you two going to continue to prate nonsense, while I am dying of curiosity?”

“It is more than likely, doctor,” said I.

“And why, then, can’t *you* enlighten me?”

“I can.”

“Well, why haven’t you been doing so all this while?”

“Because you never asked me.”

“You have grown very ceremonious, of late. Well, then, you scamp, I *do* ask you, now.”

“Too late, doctor; I won’t be second choice.”

The doctor began to swear like a trooper, and would have burst with curiosity, had not my father come to his relief. He narrated to him, in as few

words as possible, the circumstances of the case, sparing the feelings of the suffering man as much as he could.

"Are you not thoroughly ashamed of yourself, sir?" said the doctor to his patient, after hearing my father out.

But he was answered in so repentant a tone, that even he was softened.

"It is time for us to go, now, Jack," said my father, rising.

"Mr. Hopeton," said the wounded man, "I am going to make what will seem to you a strange request—it is, that you and your son spend the night with me."

"It is out of the question for me to do so. The doctor will make arrangements with your overseer to let you have the proper attention. Your sons, too, will doubtless do everything to render you comfortable."

"Ah! never mind my sons. So far as attention is concerned. Dick there, poor fellow, will wait on me faithfully—though I can't see why, for I've led him a dog's life. To be sure I've treated him with a nearer approach to kindness than I have displayed toward any one else, and I suppose he feels grateful for it. But, Mr. Hopeton, I wish to see you privately, soon—I have an important communication to make to you."

"I will certainly come and see you very soon, and often, as long as you are confined to your room."

We shook hands with the old man and left the house.

"I forgot one thing," said Mr. Warlock, calling to us. "Tell Juba he needn't fear me any longer—I am a changed man."

On getting home, we delivered this message to Juba. He scratched his head and shook it dubiously.

"Well, have you got no reply to make?" asked I.

"He b'leves in de debil," was the reply, "and dat's de reason he sends me sich word. He thinks de ole club-footed serpent is waitin' for him right now, wid his iron pitchfork. Jes let him get well, an' he'll be as bad as ever. I don't spec he'll bother me, though, 'cause he's 'fraid of master. 'Twant for you all, he'd be after me with a sharp stick."

"I think," said my father, "you are mistaken. The old man will hardly be as wicked hereafter."

"May be not."

"At least, then, you'll forgive him, till you see he's no better?"

"'Twouldn't do no good for me to forgive him. I *can't* forgive without I b'leve his repentance is *ginywine*, and I don't hardly b'leve dat yet."

"Why, you old reprobate, you are too vindictive."

"I don't know what dat is; but I tries to do right and sarve you, 'cause you've been a good master to me. I likes dem what 'specs my feelins, ef I is a nigger."

Juba seemed incorrigible, and was dismissed.

That night, at supper, my mother received an account of our day's adventure. She turned pale at the recital, but—she was a woman of great spirit—gave expression to her indignation, when she heard of the great insolence of the *canaille* with whom we had been engaged. When, however, she learned how repentant and subdued the old man was, she gave utterance to words of womanly sympathy.

"But, Jack," said she, after we had disposed of this subject, "I hear nothing of the western tour you were so anxious to make. Has your ardor abated?"

"Not in the least; but I knew that a difficulty was pending between those Warlocks and father, and I wished to see the end of it."

"Well, it is surely all over now, and you can go."

"I am very anxious to do so, but am afraid the embers may be still smouldering in those men's breasts. I know father is able to take care of himself, but I hardly feel satisfied to leave home now."

"The feeling is natural," said my father, "but I think it hardly necessary for you to stay now. Had you not better go to college?"

"Oh," interposed my mother, "*do* let his whim about this trip be gratified."

"Why, Mrs. Hopeton," said her husband, "you are the first woman I ever knew to be so anxious for her son to take a wild goose chase like this."

"Well, I am aware it is a little unusual; but I know how fully Jack has his heart set on this, and I

believe he has sense enough, or good impulse enough, not to do anything *very* wrong."

"I believe Jack to be as good as most boys; but I assure you *none* of them have much idea of right and wrong. Now, I think if this young one goes off on the kind of jaunt he speaks of, he had better have some old head with him. If I could only persuade Charley to go now."

"Why, father," said I, "he will hardly wish to go my gait. I'd be more than glad to have his company, only I am sure he would not be willing to pursue as eccentric a course as I wish to take."

"A nice business you would make of it, sir; and a good way you take of reconciling me to your fancy."

"Why, I will be perfectly candid with you father. I want to start out, I hardly know toward what point, and come back, I know not whence. I am willing to be limited as to time, but hardly anything else. If you have confidence enough in me to give your consent to this scheme, I shall feel very grateful; if not, I shall not indulge in dark thoughts about it, but commence my college course when and where you think best."

"And so, sir," said Mr. Hopeton, after some moments' thought, "you are unwilling for Charley to go with you?"

"I am sure this objection of yours is foolish, Jack," said my mother. "Charley's presence will be no restraint, even on a youth like you. He is too fond of pleasure himself to wish to curtail yours."

"You both misunderstand me," said I. "Uncle Charley's company would be very agreeable; but I *know* he would not be willing to endure the inconveniences and even hardships to be encountered in the *round* I contemplate. He is too luxurious—too fastidious. He hasn't got the same warm blood coursing in his veins that I have."

"How can you expect a matured, sensible man to have such?"

"Why, I think you have a little of it yourself, father," said I, "in spite of your apparent coolness."

"Perhaps you are right," was the smiling reply. "I shall write to Charley, nevertheless, and ask him if he will go with you, understanding fully what it is you propose to do."

"Tell him, then, father, if you please, that if at any time he is too lazy to take any proposed route, because it is a little 'hard to travel,' I shall not hesitate to leave him."

"Very well."

A very few days afterward, my father showed me a letter he had received, from which the following is an extract :

"You ask me if I will go with Jack out West, and you go on to give me some idea of the method of his intended trip. Even without these hints, I should feel very little disposition to start out with so hair-brained a youth; and as it is, I declare to you, I would rather be condemned to follow the wanderings of a young Camanche, or the gyrations of an

Arab of the desert, than his mad careerings. Turn him loose on a prairie, and it will be easier for him who never saw a lasso to noose the wild horse, than to tame this youth again. The buffalo which he expects to hunt will not be more thoroughly impatient of the dominion of man, than he will be of the trammels of society.

"No, Harry—pray excuse me. I *did* hope to teach your boy somewhat of the manners and customs of civilized life—the courtesies of society—the potent art of dressing—the power of conversation; but when you ask me to lend my aid in spoiling so promising a youth of fashion, you ask me to do violence to the instincts of my nature—to act in direct opposition to my preconceived notions of propriety; and I am compelled to refuse.

"Seriously, though, I believe it a very good idea to allow Jack to travel a little—and, just as seriously, I can't go with him. My path now lies in the haunts of civilization. You know, very well, that I loved adventure once, for you and I have had many a wild tramp together; but it is all over now. Let your boy find a companion of his own age, or go alone."

Chapter Fourth.

BEHOLD me, then, a mere youth, hardly old enough to be away from my mother's apron strings, starting out, in search of adventure, accompanied only by my faithful negro, Howard. It was a bright morning when I left the "old folks at home," to be gone from them a much longer period than ever before. Being an only child, I had, hitherto, scarcely ever left them. They had managed, although allowing me liberty to run about a good deal, to be nearly always with me; and now, that I was about to part with them, for so long a time, the tears would flow, in spite of my efforts to remain firm.

My mother, although she had used her efforts to procure my father's consent to the journey, looked sad and troubled, and her voice faltered as she bade me farewell. Even my father's tone was not so firm as usual when he told me good-by. But I jumped hastily into the carriage, and drove rapidly off, turning to look at the gray front of the old house, the stately old oaks, and the beautiful green carpet spread beneath them. As long as these were in sight, I gazed; and when they were lost to my vision, I gave myself up to anticipations of the future.

The cars whisked me over the Georgia railroad; and Atlanta, with its numerous converging routes of travel, was soon reached. Managing, in spite of the many trains, to get my baggage on the right one, I

was soon riding after the iron horse across the State. The boundary between us and Alabama was passed, and still on we sped, till we halted on the banks of the river Alabama, in the beautiful little city of Montgomery. The State legislature was in session, and unusually gay was the metropolis.

"Waiter," said I to a darkey, the first evening after my arrival, "what amusements have you here?"

"Oh! plenty," was the answer; "have something interesting every night."

"Well, what is there on this particular night?"

"Why, Uncle Dabney Jones, from Georgia, delivers a temperance lecture, to try to persuade folks to quit drinking liquor."

"Do you think he will succeed in that?"

"Sir? No *Sir*? He'll have to waste lots o' breath before he can shut the bar rooms in Montgomery. But they say he's mighty funny, though; so you'd better go out to hear him, boss."

I followed this gratuitous advice, and went to hear Uncle Dabney. I had often heard of him, but had never seen him. He had made some reputation as a temperance lecturer—and I knew that he was a preacher, either Baptist or Methodist. The lecture-room was pretty well filled with gentlemen, and a tolerable sprinkling of ladies. The speaker was introduced to the audience, and I saw a low, square-built, middle-aged man, with a rather sombre countenance.

He commenced in an indifferent style, and for some time he made no impression. But by-and-by, a humorous vein began to be visible. His face lighted up, and then I perceived he was as funny-looking a mortal as I had ever seen. The hearers began to laugh. Stroke after stroke of humor was delivered, and the lecturer had fully gained the ear of his audience. He was not at all choice and fastidious in his selection and use of means. His wit was of the broadest. He did not disdain to make use of the most common arts of buffoonery—grimace, and odd gesticulation. Indeed, I never saw or heard a more complete comedian.

And I say this without intending disrespect. It is only what Uncle Dabney would acknowledge himself. He knows that he must get men in good humor, if he would lead them, and he goes on the principle that all is fair in war.

But let us listen to him a little farther. He has just delivered some broad witticism, or told some side-splitting anecdote, with all the aids used by the low comedian, and his auditors are convulsed with laughter, when, suddenly, he glides off into pathos so genuine and deep, that tears are flowing from those who, a moment before, were shaking with mirth. The little, ugly, funny-looking buffoon, has become transformed into the thrilling orator, and strains of pure eloquence come from his lips, moving and subduing those under the sound of his voice.

And of such mosaic consists his lecture.

Mirth-provoking witticisms, pathetic appeals, ludicrous anecdotes, and noble oratory—all coming from one who, it is evident, has no great claims to the character of scholar, as that term is understood. But he has studied human nature. He has learned to touch the strings of its passions, like a ready and skilful musician. It is certain that, with an education, in addition to his excellent natural parts, he would have become a distinguished orator.

Such is my recollection of Uncle Dabney. Perhaps if I were to hear him now, I might think differently of him. It is a long while since I listened to his voice, and I cannot recall to mind, very distinctly, anything he said. I only record the impressions he made on my youthful mind.

I spent the next day in strolling about the town, and that evening I attended a ball. I had letters of introduction to several young men, and they showed me every attention. There were a great many beautiful ladies. I am convinced that nowhere on earth can be collected together, at short notice, more lovely females than in our own sunny South. Of course, young and susceptible as I was, I selected one "bright particular star," before whose shrine to offer my heart's devotions. It is useless to tell the color of her hair and her eyes. It is sufficient to say that, for the time, I was entirely captivated by her beauty, and the amiable politeness of her manners.

I had been introduced by unexceptionable endorsers and in very flattering terms. I *was*—whatever I may

be now—I *was* very—at least tolerably—good looking, rather dashing and *taking* in my manners, and then, as to my clothes, why Charley Hampton had taught me something of the art of dressing. At any rate, I made myself rather agreeable to Miss Lisle, whether by one or all these means, and I sought her hand in the dance, often, and—obtained it.

At one time, though, when the set was called, and I went to lead her out, just as I was taking her hand, I felt a touch on my shoulder, and heard :

“ I beg your pardon, sir, but I believe Miss Lisle is engaged to dance this set with me.”

I turned, and saw a tall man, with a face tolerably handsome, and at first sight of rather *distingue* and even noble appearance. A closer scrutiny, however, enabled me to discover, as I thought, something sinister, as there certainly was something supercilious, in his countenance. His voice was decidedly arrogant in its tone.

“ The lady,” answered I, “ certainly knows to whom she is engaged.”

“ Generally, ladies do,” said he in a slightly jeering tone. “ Sometimes they forget, though. Miss Lisle, I hope you will not be oblivious in this instance.”

“ I think, sir,” said I, very coolly, considering how youthful I was, “ that the lady has already decided, inasmuch as she started to take her place with me.”

"You will certainly allow her to have a voice in the matter."

"Of course, sir; that is what I wish. Miss Lisle, shall we take our places?"

"I think I am engaged to Mr. Hopeton, this time, Mr. Lorraine," said the lady.

"You forget," was the reply. "You promised early in the evening to dance this set with me."

"Let us pass, sir, if you please," said I, leading my fair partner off, and bearing Lorraine back with my arm.

I was irritated at his pertinacity, and at his standing directly in the way, as if to prevent our taking a place in the cotillon. I could see that he was very angry: but it was evident, also, that he was a man who had great self-control, and no outbreak followed, as would have been the case with one who had less command over himself. Seeing my firm demeanor, he drew back with a pretty good grace.

But in spite of his bow, and his careless bearing, I could see that his eye gleamed with a deadly hatred, as he followed us with his gaze. Several times during the dance, as I looked toward him, I encountered a glance of fixed, stern, malignity; and in return, I always gave him one of angry defiance. Immediately, though, his eye would assume an expression of sneering coolness, and wander over, by, and away, from me. It was not averted quickly, as if its owner were embarrassed or frightened; but it turned deliberately and easily, as if he had mere-



ly gazed on me a moment through idle curiosity, and had not found me worthy of much regard.

At length, I asked Miss Lisle who the gentleman was.

"He is a sojourner here," said she. "I think he resides in North Carolina, where he practised law, and is said to have acquired an immense fortune."

"I believe you called him Lorraine?"

"Yes."

"Isn't he rather arrogant in his deportment?"

"You see for yourself."

"Well, has he not that character? But I beg pardon; I am inquisitive."

"Never mind; it is no matter. But I know very little of Mr. Lorraine. I have already told you all I can."

Of course, I asked no more questions. So many and impertinent were the glances Lorraine threw on me, at the same time that he baffled every attempt I met to fix his gaze, that at length I determined to seek him—rash boy that I was—and demand an explanation. After I had come to this resolution, I looked toward him no more till the cotillon was over. When I had conducted my partner to a seat, I turned to find my gentleman. He was not to be seen in the place I last beheld him.

I sought him through the whole of the crowded room, but he was gone, and I saw him no more that night. It was now very late, and the ball being over,

I returned to the hotel. The dancing had somewhat tired me, and I was soon asleep.

Strolling to the Statehouse the next day, I saw my rival of the night before, standing on the steps of the building, and conversing with a group of gentlemen. I passed as slowly as I possibly could, to give myself an opportunity of observing him. He appeared to be a middle-aged man, in good preservation, with a countenance which would be called noble and commanding. It presented an appearance of considerable intellect, but at the same time there were perceptible indications of craft, which detracted considerably from an otherwise prepossessing set of features. Still, I was already prejudiced against the man, and, perhaps, was hardly able to form an unbiased opinion.

Of one thing I was sure—that he was an exceedingly sensual man, if the form of the mouth and the glance of the eye meant anything. His voice was deliberate, full, and rich—just the sort to command attention. His companions seemed to listen with considerable deference, though they all appeared to be easy, familiar acquaintances.

As I sauntered slowly along, I caught his eye, and looked steadily into it, to read its meaning. For a moment it kindled, and he seemed about to lose his imperturbable self-possession. But he appeared to think better of it, and, as his glance wandered off, he continued his conversation in the same quiet tone.

Nothing of interest was going on in either of the legislative halls, and I wandered out as listlessly as I had gone in. There was nothing to detain me longer in Montgomery, so I took the boat for Mobile. Thence, the "Oregon" conveyed me to the Crescent City. As I jogged along in a cab over the rough pavement, on my way to the Verandah, my impressions were by no means favorable. Such constant and uniform jolting I had never experienced.

But the sources of amusement, and also of expense, are numerous in New-Orleans, and I spent several weeks there pleasantly enough—having brought letters of introduction. My time was passed, as might be expected of a youth, away from home, and with plenty of money at his disposal.

A day or two before I left for the prairies, I received a letter from my father, a part of which I will lay before my readers :

"My Dear Boy"—it began—"A day or two after you left home, I went to see old Mr. Warlock. No one was in his room besides himself, except his faithful Dick. His face was expressive of great mental anguish, in spite of a sort of stupor that seemed to overspread it.

" 'I am glad you have come,' said he, reaching out his hand to me. 'My sons have deserted me. They never come in my room. I don't know that their presence would be much gratification to me but I cannot help feeling their entire neglect. Great God ! how the sins of our youth are visited upon us

in our old age. How terribly am I rewarded for the manner in which I raised my children. Oh remorse! remorse!

“He was becoming very much excited.

“‘Mr. Warlock,’ said I to him, ‘recollect that your physician charged you to keep quiet. Has he been to see you, this morning?’

“‘You are right,’ was the reply. ‘I must keep cool. Yes, the doctor has been here this morning, and he says I am doing very well, but he knows nothing of the wound here,’ striking his hand on his breast, ‘though it has been festering there for years. I *will* be calm,’ continued he, seeing remonstrance in my face.

“‘I hope you will,’ said I. ‘It is absolutely necessary that you should.’

“‘True,’ said the old man. ‘And yet it is next to impossible for one to do this, and make the communication I am thinking of.’

“‘Then, sir, you must postpone it till I come again, which will be in a few days.’

“‘Let me tell it now,’ he exclaimed. ‘Let me tell it; it will do me good.’

“But I saw plainly that it would not do for him to speak of a subject which agitated him so much, so I firmly refused to listen to him, and I took my leave, promising to call again when he had gained more strength.

“‘That may never be,’ said he, gloomily, as I left the room.

"I called repeatedly, he insisting that he should make his communication; but, although my curiosity was strongly excited, it was only a day or two ago that I thought it prudent to listen to him. On that occasion, as I entered the house, Jake and Joe Warlock were sitting in the porch, smoking, in silence. It was the first time I had seen them, since the unfortunate *fracas*. With a slight salutation, and inquiry after their father, I passed on to Mr. Warlock's room.

"I found him sitting up.

"Your visits,' said he, 'are the only events which break up the monotony of my horribly lonely life. My former companions, finding there is to be no more carousing and gambling here, do not come near me; and, keeping at a distance, they act in accordance with my wishes. My respectable neighbors still avoid me. They have no faith in my reformation, and I cannot blame them.'

"They will soon find,' answered I, 'that you have renounced your habits of dissipation, and then they will be very kind to you.'

"It makes little difference,' was the melancholy reply; 'there is not much life left for me, and *none* of the happiness of life.'

"Let me persuade you to indulge a more hopeful vein of thought.'

"You do not know all, or you would perceive how impossible it is for me to do so. But when I requested you to come and see me, I expected to

make some confessions with regard to my past life. Since then, however, I've concluded to draw up a written statement, which I now hold in my hand. You see it is sealed, and I beg you will not open it till after my death. Besides this, I wish to intrust you with my will.'

" 'I am perfectly willing to take charge of it; but why not give it to your sons?'

" 'Are you not aware that I have no confidence in their integrity?'

" 'True; but as they are your only heirs, I do not see whom they can cheat.'

" 'You are mistaken. I have left at least half my property—as you will see, on reading the will—to my nephew.'

" 'Do I say, *my* property?' he added, after a moment's pause. 'I have only made arrangements to restore it to its right owner.'

" 'Your nephew's name is—what?' I asked.

" 'You will find full information in the sealed package which I have delivered to you, as to who he is. You must advertise for him. You are appointed one of my executors. The half of my property, or, more properly, *all* that I possess rightfully, is devised to my sons; and they are, also, appointed executors.

" 'I must be candid with you,' he continued, 'and say to you that the execution of that will may involve you in personal danger. At least it will expose you to the enmity of my sons. Indeed, if they find out that you have this, my testament, in your

hands, and become acquainted with its provisions, I do not know what desperate game they might attempt. I have selected you, out of the number of men whom I know, to undertake this trust, because I believe you to be *just* and *fearless*. Now, may I rely on you ?

“ ‘ Give me the will,’ said I. ‘ Let the man who would bar the course of justice confront me.’

“ ‘ It may seem very strange to you,’ answered Mr. Warlock, after expressing satisfaction and relief at my receiving the will ; ‘ it may seem very strange that I request you not to open that confession till after my death, and that I do not give you a verbal account of my wickedness ; but it is a long, sickening tale, and I could not muster the nerve to go through with it.’

“ ‘ Never mind,’ answered I, ‘ let it pass. I hope it will not prove so bad as you represent it. I must go now, but will not neglect to visit you again. Good-by.’

“ So I left the room. As I came into the porch, the young men eyed me suspiciously, wondering, no doubt, what my long interview with their father meant. I sat down without an invitation, and commenced a conversation with them about the crops, &c. I thought there had best be a good understanding between us, since I had fully convinced them that it would be useless to try to intimidate me. After a few words, one of them mustered civility enough to offer me a cigar, which I accepted. The

crops did not seem to interest them much, so I passed from these to horses and dogs, drawing them out, until they conversed freely, in spite of themselves.

“ ‘Now, gentlemen,’ said I, at length, ‘we have had two rows. You commenced with the idea of frightening me; but you find you do not succeed. I want to know if you are satisfied. I offer you peace, if you will have it, and I beg you will be sincere, so that I may know what to rely on. If you don’t want to be friendly, say so. If you wish to forget our differences, give me to understand it.’ ”

“ ‘I am willing to be friendly,’ said Joe, after a moment’s hesitation; ‘you and the old man are such great cronies, and I’m satisfied, any way.’ ”

“ ‘Well,’ said Jake, ‘there’s no use in being stubborn about the matter, so here’s my fist.’ ”

“Now, I have not unlimited confidence in this suddenly made-up friendship. Indeed, if the boors were not satisfied with their former attempts at bullying, they would doubtless try it again. I do not think, however, they will molest me any farther, even if they discover that I have in my possession a will cutting them out of one half of the property in their father’s possession.”

This is all the letter which is necessary to my narrative. It contained much matter for speculation. I was satisfied, however, with my father, that the Warlocks would be willing to let him alone; otherwise, I should have set out immediately for home.

Chapter Fifth.

A LITTLE incident occurred, before I left New-Orleans, which I must record. I was walking one night, along a narrow, ill-lighted street, where scarcely a person was to be seen. Occasionally, I met a solitary pedestrian, and several passed me, for I was going slowly, being in a musing frame of mind. At length, a couple of persons passed, who attracted my attention. A female, closely veiled, was attended by a man. The former seemed trying to get rid of the latter, judging from her rapid gait, and the manner in which she kept to the extreme outer edge of the sidewalk, as if to avoid the possibility of contact.

When they had gone a little ahead of me, the man spoke:

"Why are you so coy, my pretty bird? Why avoid me so?"

At the same time, as if oblivious of the fact that some one was just behind him, he attempted to pass his arm around the woman's waist.

"Oh, you wretch!" exclaimed the latter, in a voice trembling with both indignation and fear. "Leave me! Begone, sir!"

"Not yet, my lassie," replied the brute, still endeavoring to force his companion to submit to his familiarity. "Don't push my arm so. How active you are. Such a face. I'll get before you."

"And I'll avoid you thus."

"What! crossing to the other side? You forget that I possess the powers of locomotion also."

My curiosity was aroused, and I went over to the other sidewalk, at some distance behind, to see how the affair would result. We now met several other persons, and the couple before me were quiet; the female, however, still continuing her rapid walk, and the man dropping a little behind. The former soon increased her gait to a run, but her persecutor quickly overtook her."

"Now," said he, "we have passed the last person we'll see soon. You find running is of no use, so you'd as well be quiet. Let me see those pretty eyes," he continued, trying to remove the veil from her face.

"For God's sake, sir! if you have any of the feelings of a gentleman, I appeal to them. Leave me!"

"Well, just let me put my arm around your waist, and we'll walk along quietly and talk the matter over."

"You *shall* not. I will alarm the street."

"Alarm the devil! There's nobody here will care for your screeching. Be a good girl now, and just give me one sweet kiss. Perhaps I'll listen to reason then;" and he tried to snatch what he had asked for.

During all this time, I had walked along among some trees, so that I had avoided being observed by the persons I was watching, although they had several times turned to see if any one was behind."

"Never shall my lips be polluted by yours," was the answer to the man's last speech. "I had rather die!"

"You are a fool," was the brutal rejoinder. "I've tried fair means, and now I'll try foul;" and he reached his arm to seize her.

Nimblely eluding him, she started to run, and was pursued. I followed quickly, having determined to protect the girl—boy and chivalrous as I was. The man soon overtook the object of his chase, but just as he did so, she turned suddenly into an alley so dark, that though the pursuer followed as quickly as he could, I hesitated a moment before entering it. In that time he had again overtaken her.

"Ah, you vixen!" said he; "now I'll pay you for your obstinacy."

"Then, if you *will* persist," was the answer, "God have mercy on your soul."

"You infernal she-devil! you've stabbed me; but I've got hold of your wrist, and you shall suffer; just feel the blood spouting from the wound. Wait till I get the knife out of your hand, and—"

Here the struggle became so severe, I could distinguish nothing that was said. The screams of the female, mingled with the curses and threats of the man. At the first mention made of stabbing I had rushed forward. Though young, I was uncommonly strong and active. Seizing the man by the coat collar, I gave his heels a sudden trip, which brought him heavily to the ground. My repeater was in

hand—for he is but a fool who wanders through certain parts of New-Orleans alone and unarmed.

“Who are you, sir, and what do you mean?” exclaimed my antagonist, as he rose to his feet, and began to feel for a weapon.

“It matters not,” said I, “you were acting the scoundrel, and I came up to protect the person you were insulting.”

“Oh! how can I thank you?” now exclaimed the female, whom I thought I could discover to be a lovely young girl. “The blessed Virgin must have sent you.”

“No—but perhaps you are right. I was going to say that accident sent me. You, however, probably have assigned the true cause of the interposition.”

“I shall never be able to repay you, sir.”

“Your gratitude is sufficient,” answered I.

“But, sir,” broke in the picked-up man, “do you suppose I am going to allow this interference in my affairs?”

“You can hardly prevent what has already taken place; and besides, one of the parties in this affair seems to be very much pleased with my action in the matter.”

“My arm is already sore and stiff, from the effects of that knife, or you should not escape unpunished.”

“As to that, please call at the Verandah to-morrow, and if you are a gentleman, you shall have satisfaction.”

Just then, a man passed with a lantern, and as the

light fell on the face of my antagonist, I recognized Lorraine. He knew me at the same moment.

"So you are the impertinent boy I met in Montgomery," said he. "This is the second time you have crossed my path. You'll rue it! No one ever mars my plans with impunity."

"Your wound protects you now, or you should rue *your* impertinence. I scorn your threats."

"Very good," said Lorraine. "We part now, but will meet again."

"Whenever you please," was my answer. "Perhaps you will be so good as to appoint a time and method now."

"You don't understand my way of settling these things ; but you will one day," was the reply of Lorraine, as he walked off.

The girl had hastened off as soon as the lamp was seen coming, so I made the best of my way back to the hotel. I stayed in New-Orleans one day after this, but saw nothing of Lorraine ; and a short time afterward I was on the prairies, in company with a party of rangers and huntsmen. These latter were composed of amateurs, and veteran woodsmen, hired to accompany them. They were all strangers to me, personally ; though starting with the letters of introduction my father gave me, I had managed to get one to the captain of the rangers, of which the following is a copy :

"DEAR PRESTON : The bearer of this is a youth, desirous of 'adventuring.' Can't you put him in the

way? Seriously, my young friend wants to see a little frontier life, and you will particularly oblige me by affording him all the facilities in your power, and at the same time, taking care that he is not exposed to *too* many hardships. Yours,

“H——.”

“There,” said my excellent friend, “that will insure you a welcome from the very man, of all others, who is calculated to ‘put you through’ your intended expedition in the most comfortable style.”

“Comfort!” exclaimed I. “What does a man want with comfort, on a trip like this?”

“Ah! that speech of yours convinces me how lucky you are in happening along just as Captain Preston is about to start; for he will make you comfortable, in spite of yourself. But, seeing how very raw you are, just let me add a postscript to that letter.”

I had at least sense enough to acquiesce with a good grace, being convinced that a man who had travelled ought to know better than a tyro. So there was added the following:

“P. S.—Jack Hopeton is a fine, spirited young fellow, but green as the Old Scratch, provided the figure will do; and has taken up a notion that comfort is to be dispensed with, on a prairie excursion. See to it, that the youth is properly equipped, or he may suffer.”

“I am persuaded that you are right,” said I, on reading the last lines. “You have had an opportunity of informing yourself.”

"If that is your spirit," replied H., "you will do well. You and Preston will be good friends."

So I placed myself under the directions of the gallant captain, who assigned me a place in the mess, and saw to the purchasing of my accoutrements. My messmates and I hired an old hunter, to accompany us, and act as "chief cook and bottle-washer;" and besides, I carried Howard, a bright negro, of about my own age, who had been my playmate in childhood, and my servant afterward.

There was one point on which I needed no urging—to make me provide myself well. I spared no pains, nor expense, to mount myself and my follower in good style; and we rode forth on steeds equal, in speed and strength, to the best.

We left the station on a bright, lovely morning, with a sky over our heads as blue as ever shone on Italia's sunny land. It seemed to look down propitiously and smilingly upon us, as if offering the shelter of its canopy to men who were not to sleep under a roof for many, many nights to come. Clad in my tasty hunting suit—a frock of dressed deer-skin, with a cape edged with gayly-colored fringe, leggings of the same material, also fringed, and a glazed leather cap, whose large, projecting visor sheltered the eyes from the sun and rain—as I bestrode my noble bay, my blood bounded with tumultuous joy, and I could hardly refrain from such an exhibition of enthusiasm as would have called forth smiles of contempt from the veterans of our party.

I felt a sensation of wild freedom and independence, as I remembered that I was about leaving, for a while, civilization, with its thousand shackles of form and conventionality, to see Nature in her grand unmul-tilated magnificence, and to mingle with the rudest and simplest of her children ; I compared the frivolity and want of purpose of the fashionables with whom I had associated, to the earnestness and manliness of my present companions, and the red men we were to meet.

I looked around on our cavalcade, and saw the weather-beaten veteran, with grizzled hair and iron countenance, but undimmed and eagle eye, sitting his horse with the ease known only to those who are accustomed to the saddle from childhood, and swinging his ponderous rifle as strength alone will enable one to do. Beside him rode the young ranger, whose eager and restless glance betokened the spirit as yet undisciplined by hardship and danger.

Our gallant captain was distinguished for his graceful horsemanship and soldierly bearing. He seemed fifty-five, or perhaps sixty years old ; but although his locks were turning gray, and he had been designated as old by my friend, there was not the slightest evidence of age in his movements. And although one of the most careful and wary of men, when there was necessity for being so, his manner was ordinarily dashing and bold.

All of us wore dresses similar in their main features, and varied a little, according to the taste, or

ideas of convenience entertained by each particular wearer ; to-wit, a frock, confined by a belt—in which were stuck the indispensable repeaters—leather leggings, and caps.

We marched steadily on for several days, stopping only at night. At the end of that time, we halted for twenty-four hours, to allow those who were so “keen” for it, an opportunity of hunting. Among these, of course, I was one. Our huntsman, old Hinks, went out, and invited me to go with him, but I chose to try my luck alone. With rifle in hand, I sallied forth, toward a heavy clump of timber on the side of an eminence to the East of the camp. I had never had much experience in still hunting, but I trusted to the little knowledge I had picked up, and to a sort of instinctive insight into woodcraft, which I inherited from my father.

Wandering through the silent forest, I passed several places likely to afford deer, but saw none for a good while. As I walked warily along, stopping now and then to reconnoitre, at length, as far ahead as my vision would reach, I saw in a little dell, green and fresh, around the head of a marshy thicket, five of the “denizens of the forest”—one noble buck, with branching antlers, and four does. My heart fluttered at the sight. They were feeding fearlessly and leisurely, unaware of the vicinity of their enemy, man.

I regretted that I did not bring my double-barrelled gun, as I felt confident of being able to get

near enough for a shot with it to take effect. If I had brought it, instead of the rifle, I thought I should have killed *two* deer, whereas, I must now satisfy myself with *one*. Immediately, on seeing the game, I stepped behind a large tree, and having formed a plan of approach, I commenced to shorten the distance between myself and the quarry.

The large trees stood convenient, and availing myself of them, I drew nearer and nearer the unconscious deer. Where the growth was thick, it was easy work, stealing from one massy trunk to another ; but before I could get to the giant of the forest, whence I expected to make my shot, I had to cross an open space. To pass this, unseen, required nice management. Down on all-fours I went, sliding my rifle along, while I moved on, personating a hog, keeping a stump, or something of the sort, between me and my game, as well as I could, and stopping perfectly still whenever the old buck turned his head toward me.

At length, the ticklish point was passed, and I rested secure, and perfectly hidden, at a distance of some sixty-five yards from my anticipated victims. Here arose a new source of trouble and delay. I wanted to shoot the big buck, but it seemed as if he divined my intention, and however he might move in grazing, he always managed to keep a doe between himself and the muzzle of my gun.

A long time I waited, patiently, and it began to grow late. I had almost concluded to give up the

much-coveted prize, but my pride decided against this. Surely, I thought, he will give me a chance after a while. But no; I waited in vain. He was inexorable. "It is buck or nothing," said I, finally, to myself; and I stepped out quickly and quietly, about ten paces to my right, bringing myself in full view of the obstinate brute.

My gun was cocked and poised, as I moved. Just as I stopped, the game raised their heads a moment to gaze in astonishment, before bounding off. I had accustomed myself to fire quick, and that moment was fatal to the gallant buck. The rifle cracked sharply; the deer plunged forward some distance through the woods, and fell to rise no more. The rest of the herd swept off like the wind; and I, after re-loading, approached the fallen animal. Life was already extinct, but I cut his throat, and the purple tide gushed out.

Throwing my rifle on my shoulder, I started for the camp. Hunger and fatigue urged me forward as fast as my legs could carry me, but my lucky star was in the ascendant that day. I heard a rush and tramp coming toward where I was standing. It instantly struck me that it might be caused by deer, frightened by some one of the number of huntsmen who had started out when I did, and I hid behind a tree.

My surmises were correct. Soon, a herd of the fleet rangers of the forest came crashing through the woods and undergrowth, as if closely pursued, and

passed so near to me that to kill one was an easy feat. I selected the one next to me, and fired. This time, a fat doe was the victim, and I was proud enough, as my bright hunting knife severed her jugular.

Arrived at the camp, I threw myself down on the ground to rest a short time before setting out with Howard and the pack horse to bring in my game. Hinks had not yet got back; but it was not long before he came trudging home with a cross, disappointed look.

"Well, old forester," said I, "what luck?"

"The devil's own," was the answer.

"If you allude to his luck in catching souls, it was very good."

"Well, that ain't the sort I'm talking of, then, for mine was mighty bad."

"I am sorry to hear so. How was it?"

"Well, let me have somethin' to drink, first," said old Hinks, sinking down on the grass. "You wouldn't have a man to talk of his bad luck, and not give him nothin' to raise his sperrits?"

"Now you can talk, then, I suppose," said I, after the old fellow had tossed down three fingers and a half of rectified. "And don't try to make out that accident kept you from killing anything, when it's just because you didn't hunt as you ought."

"Jest ax them that knows me. What do you know about it? But this was the way it happened: I found three or four as fine deer as ever you saw in your life, and the wind was just right. Well, I crept

along, and was doing first rate, and all of a sudden the wind shifted, and blowed right from me to the deer. They sniffed it a little, then up with their cussed flags, and away they shot like old Nick. I jumped from behind my tree, and sent a bullet after them, but 'twan't no use; they was so far off. I thought, though, I mout ha' hit one."

"Perhaps you did," suggested some one.

"*Perhaps*, the mischief! You reckon I didn't look to see? No, I didn't draw a drop of blood, for I looked faithful."

"Well, that was bad luck."

"Wern't it? But that wern't all."

"You didn't 'give it up so,' then?"

"No, that was soon in the morning. I went on and on, for I was determined to try hard for some game, and presently I found more deer a feedin'. Now, thinks I, I'll make up, for I never did fail twice hand-runnin'. Well, I crept up just as close as ever I want to be to game, and raises my rifle, and takes good aim at a big buck, and pulls trigger."

"Then down came the buck."

"Not a bit of it," answered old Hinks, turning to his rifle, and giving it a kick, "That durned, mean, infernal old soap-stick thar missed fire, and the deer run off and left me caperin' about and cussin' like a mad fool; for I never did miss two such chances, hand-runnin', in my life before. And 'twant my fault neither, but that no-count gun's there. I never knowed it to act so mean in my life. The cap busted, gentlemen."

"Where were you when you frightened the last deer?" I asked.

"Just quarterin' across the hill yonder."

"And how long has it been?"

"'Bout an hour ago."

"Then I have good news for you. I killed one of the deer that ran off from you, and Howard and I are going to start pretty soon to bring it home."

"The thunder you did! 'Taint good news to hear how a boy that don't know nothing 'bout huntin', beat an old hunter like me."

"Yes, but don't you know," answered I soothingly, "you said 'twasn't your fault?"

"And if I did, you all don't believe it—grinnin' at a feller in that way."

"But I *do*, though. Besides, you are mistaken, if you think I know nothing of hunting. My father has taught me a good deal of the art."

"What have you got to hunt in Georgy?"

"We have deer in some places; though they are not as plentiful as I find them here. I've had some little experience with them, however."

"Well," said the veteran, a little mollified, "I believe you're a right cute, clever chap. Was it the old buck you killed?"

"No; It was a beautiful fat doe. But I had already killed the biggest sort of a buck before your deer came along."

"You did! How did you do it?"

"Fairly and squarely, as a huntsman should. I stalked him, *secundum artem*."

"Se—what?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Hinks. I mean I did it in just as good style as you, or anybody else could."

"Well, jest tell me how you done it."

I made my interrogator acquainted with the details already known to the reader.

"I believe you'll make a hunter, young un," said he, slapping me on the back, "if you keep on like you've begun. Make me understand whar the meat is, and me and your darkey will bring it, and we'll have *perhaps* the best *brile*."

"Never mind the darkey. Get the horses ready; you and I will go after the game."

We were soon mounted and galloping through the woods. Presently we returned with our prize, and riding in, we encountered Captain Preston.

"Hello!" was his exclamation, as he saw our game. "Why, Hinks, you've had fine luck to-day."

"'Taint me, sir, though; it's this youngster what hired me to come along and show him how to hunt, and he beats me all to pieces. I didn't kill anything to-day."

The captain knew well enough that if the old huntsman had failed to bag a deer, it was owing to unavoidable bad luck, as he was acquainted with Hinks' skill; so he paid no attention to this answer, but congratulated me on my success.

"Come round to our fire and take supper to-night, captain," said I, "and we can give you something nice; for, unless I am mistaken, this doe is as fat as deer ever get to be."

"Thank you," was the reply, "I will. Our mess have had as bad luck in hunting as Hinks."

Up to that night we had been eating civilized victuals, although we partook of it in rather rough style, and I had hardly realized that I was on my long-wished-for wild trip. This time, though, our meal consisted principally of game brought down by my own trusty rifle. Thanks to the advice of older heads than mine, I had brought along all the seasonings. Ours were the appetites acquired by severe exercise in the open air; and never was more ample justice done to a supper than was to ours on that occasion.

"Well, Hopeton," said the captain, as he helped himself to another piece of the excellent dish before us, "Harvey wrote me you were rather green, but you certainly have made a display of anything else but verdancy to-day."

"Thanks to you, captain, and friend Harvey. I pride myself on being an apt scholar, and I soon found that I had started wrong; so I tacked about as quickly as possible."

"Yes, you laid in supplies according to my advice; but who does your cooking? If you are the genius who broiled this venison, you certainly are a talented youth."

"That darkey there, Howard, prepared the supper."

"Why, how did he learn his art? He is as young as you are."

"Well, Howard is a bright boy naturally, and I've

taken uncommon pains with him. Besides, I was assisted by my father in making him a model 'follower.' He is an excellent groom ; no French valet can excel him in the duties of a 'gentleman's gentleman ;' and you have a specimen of his culinary abilities."

"Yes, and can recommend them. Ah !" he continued, as he made another attack on the venison, "Ude never served up such a supper as this ; and why ? No doubt he possessed the capacity, but he lacked the material."

"I should like to see a Parisian open his eyes, captain, on that assertion," said Tom Harper, a fine, dashing fellow, who had roamed half the world over, and now went to the prairies once a year.

"Nevertheless, I assert the truth."

"Why, they get venison in Paris as fat as it can be made."

"Yes, but then it wasn't fattened in the right place, or on the right kind of food."

"Perhaps not."

"No. And then Ude never had a fire kindled out in the wild woods of America. His cooking was done in close, pent-up places."

"I am convinced at last," said Tom. "But, Hopeton," he resumed, "you have a treasure in Howard."

"Yes," said Captain Preston, as he finished his supper, and poured out a stiff drink of the 'rye ;' "and here's long life to him."

Pipes and cigars were produced, and we fell back on the grass. Conversation had been lively, but the tobacco smoke for awhile seemed to exert a lulling influence, and for sometime no word was spoken, as we reclined on our elbows and sent up the curling wreaths till we were enveloped in a fragrant cloud.

"I think," said Tom Harper, "that this life is the happiest, the most free from care and petty vexations, of any in the world."

"Speaking of guns," replied Captain Preston, "I have thought several times I would ask you about this very thing, Tom. You've travelled all over Europe, and mixed with the gay, fashionable, rowdy, dissipated society there. You've been to the principal fashionable resorts in our own country, North and South. I believe you still go to some of them once in two or three years."

Tom nodded.

"And you say this life is the happiest?"

"Yes. I am so firmly convinced of it, that I think I shall go no more to these fashionable watering-places. I am bound to see New-Orleans and St. Louis occasionally; but no more Saratogas, and White Sulphurs, and Catoosas for me."

"I've loafed around a little through the United States," said Captain Preston, "and have long since come to the same conclusion; but I wished to hear *your* opinion, knowing you had tried more forms of civilization than I had."

"Oh!" growled Tom, "there's such faithlessness,

selfishness, heartlessness ; such entire and utter want of principle ; such a complete absence of everything like noble impulse in what is called 'society !' I have grown *sick* of it."

So bitter was Harper's tone ; so unlike the dashing gayety he had before exhibited, that I was astonished. Even Captain Preston, who had known him a long while, seemed surprised.

"Yes," continued our companion, "I hate, despise, execrate, and spit upon the contemptible asses ! The grinning baboons ! The brainless parrots ! The vicious idiots ! The chattering, malicious gossips and slanderers ! Filchers of good names !"

"Why, Tom, I am amazed. 'Thereby' certainly 'hangs a tale.' I did not think of raising you so. But you rather introduced the subject yourself. Let us dismiss it, and then you'll be yourself again—the free, open, jolly, kind-hearted Tom Harper."

"No blame at all to you, captain. But I wish to be understood. Our young friend here, will, I expect, be a good deal in fashionable society ; and I want to request him to remember what I say of it, and see if he be not convinced of its truth, in the course of his experience. I say, though, I wish to be understood. By society, I do not mean *all* who go into it ; but the large *majority*. Occasionally you find noble-hearted people 'among them, but not of them.'"

"Well," replied I, "your denunciations shall be treasured up by me."

"It is indeed singular," continued Tom, "that really noble-hearted people are found who persist in associating with the heartless throng!"

"But, ah! how few they are. Many seem the right sort till you apply a test. Some will stand an ordinary test, but nothing beyond. Try them, and they are found wanting. They are firm friends, so long as it is their interest to be so. Let their friendship come in contact with self, and the latter outweighs and totally destroys the former. Philip of Macedon said, that no city was impregnable which would admit a mule laden with gold. Horace Walpole said, 'every man has his price.' I almost believe it. The price with some may be money; with others, the gratification of ambition, in its various phases. Love overcomes some, and revenge yet others."

"I cannot help hoping, though," said I, "that my lot will be cast among more pleasant people than those you have described."

"Pleasant? Yes, pleasant as you please, till you find them out. Mighty kind and obliging as long as you do not need assistance; but just get into—but I'll grumble no more now. Good-night, gentlemen." And the misanthrope sought his buffalo robe.

"'Tisn't often Tom gets in such a humor," said Captain Preston, rising. "He'll be entirely different to-morrow. It's bed-time, though. We want to make a good day's march to-morrow, and 'twont be long before we will show you bigger game than deer, Hopeton."

"You mean buffalo, captain ; and mentioning them will cheat me out of several hours' sleep."

"Ah, you must get over that," said the captain, as he strode off.

Chapter Sixth.

THE next morning I was aroused from the sound sleep into which I sank, some hours after the departure of my guests on the night before, by a loud cheer. Opening my eyes, I saw Tom Harper, bare-headed and in his shirt-sleeves. He had been down to the little brook, near which we pitched our camp, to lave his hands, face, neck, and breast, and now stood, with his shirt-collar open, displaying his manly throat—forming a picture of health and manly beauty.

"Why, Hopeton," he exclaimed, in a hearty, jovial voice, in which I could not detect the least trace of last night's bitterness, "you are lazy, man. Get up, and enjoy the luxury of bathing in the delightful, clear, cold water, and of breathing this invigorating atmosphere. The bugle sounded long ago."

I jumped up, and followed my messmate's advice. Howard soon gave us breakfast, and we began our day's march. Tom Harper and I rode together, and I watched him narrowly to discover some return of his misanthropy, but in vain ; not the least sign did

I perceive. A most pleasant and entertaining companion did I discover him to be—full and running over with animal spirits. No one, to see his gay, bold demeanor on the line, would have imagined that he ever harbored a single thought of aught save fun and frolic. At length, I ventured on a slight allusion to our last night's conversation. He burst into a loud, genuine laugh.

"Somehow," said he, "I had the blues ; but don't judge me by what you hear when I happen to get into one of those fits. I am one of the happiest, most careless mortals you ever saw. Even if men were all I represented them to be, it would not matter with me, for I spend most of my time in the woods."

And so the subject dropped. We journeyed along gayly ; sometimes, so plentiful was game becoming, shooting the deer as they crossed our line of march ; camping at night by the side of bright and beautiful brooks—at one time under gigantic trees, and at another, in fairy green dells. Supper over, we would assemble round the camp-fire, and under the mild and soothing influence of the Virginia weed, discourse of hunting, of fighting Indians, of cooking, of love, philosophy, religion, or any other subject which happened to come up.

Sometimes, Old Hinks would tell us of a fight with a *bar*, *painter*, or *Injun*. These hunting tales are all alike, and as the reader has probably perused scores, I will not trouble him with any more.

Those were glorious nights. Never have I enjoyed a fashionable soiree as I did those re-unions around the camp-fire. Those who conversed, all had something to say, except my humble self. They had all seen something to talk about. There was no bald, disjointed, meaningless chat. The captain was learned and eloquent in his discourse on war and cooking—his two favorite themes. Tom Harper was rich in European experience, and he could always command our attention with incidents of various character. All the hunters and Indian fighters were full of tales of border warfare, whether with *varmints* or redskins.

We gradually got away from the forest. The timber which we now passed flourished most on the margins of streams ; and, finally, the broad and boundless prairies opened their wide expanse to my admiring gaze. One morning we were riding along quietly, when suddenly we heard from the head of the line, the cry of "Buffalo ! Buffalo !" I had inquired very carefully of Tom Harper, concerning the mode of hunting these animals, since Captain Preston had, as the best means of carrying out his friend Harvey's request as to taking care of me, placed me in charge of said Harper.

I had been instructed minutely, and had, ever since we got into the neighborhood of the "big game," kept myself *primed*, as well as my pistols. At the cry of "buffalo," the whole cavalcade was in commotion ; nor could I perceive that the veterans

were one whit less eager and excited than the novices. Calling on Howard to follow me, I galloped forward.

“Where are the buffaloes?” I exclaimed; but my question was useless.

The direction in which many of the men were galloping informed me, and I dashed after them. I had been in the wild ride after deer, and many an exciting burst after Reynard had stirred my blood; but never had I been in a chase so maddening as the one on which I now entered. As we charged the buffaloes, they scattered and scoured over the plain. I selected one, and put my gallant steed out after him. Away, with his rolling, lumbering gait, speeded the huge beast, and, shouting in my eagerness, I pressed close upon him.

Soon my blooded bay closed the gap which had intervened when I first started, and drawing a pistol, as I put spurs and rushed by the buffalo, I discharged a load full at his side. It was my first experience in this line, and I was too much excited, and my horse was too restive, for me to take accurate aim. As I passed, a terrific lunge from the game frightened the animal I was riding, almost beyond my control, and he ran some distance at full speed, before I could manage to take him up. When I turned, the buffalo had succeeded in placing a considerable distance between himself and me.

This was again passed, however, but I found it difficult to get my thoroughly frightened horse close

to the fiery red eyes, peering out from the fearful, shaggy front of the ugly beast [we were pursuing. When I got near enough, I could see the blood trickling to the ground from the wound made by my bullet, but it in no way lessened the speed at which the brute rolled on. Once more, though, by the force of curb and spur, I made a rush and a shot.

This time, I anticipated Master Charley's trick, and was so well prepared that I brought him up in a few bounds, and turned again toward my game. The blood was streaming out from his side, and he staggered in his gallop, but did not fall. Again were the curb and spur put in requisition to enable me to discharge a broadside, and this time, at the explosion of my pistol, the buffalo, pitching forward, fell heavily to the ground.

Dismounting, I approached cautiously, and finding that he was indeed dead, made Howard cut up his throat and let out the blood. He lay stretched out before me—my first buffalo—and the huge limbs which, a few moments before, bore him in pride and strength over his native plain, was now stiff and lifeless. The eye which had glowed with so fierce and fiery a lustre, was now obscured by the dull film of death. As these thoughts gradually stole through my mind, while gazing at the mountain of flesh before me, the feeling of excitement passed away, and something akin to pity and regret occupied its place.

But I was born with the spirit of a true sportsman. This spirit had descended as an inheritance

from all the Hopetons who had preceded me, and had been fostered until there was no checking it; so pride at my success soon remained the only feeling with which I regarded my victim.

"Golly! Marse Jack," said Howard, "this is a whopper. I do believe you've killed the biggest buffalo in the herd."

"I think he *is* the largest," answered I; "or one of the largest. Pretty tough race we had, Howard."

"Yes, sir. Twasn't like them fox races we have at home; but I didn't think such big, awkward things could run at all. He is an ugly, savage-looking rascal. I tell you, Marse Jack, when he made them lunges, every time you passed, it made my blood run cold."

"I took very good care to keep out of his reach. I was prepared for those wicked attempts, for Tom Harper had told all about it; so I knew what to do almost as well as if I had hunted them before."

"Old Mr. Hinks will think you are cut out for a hunter, sure enough, now."

"No doubt of it; but we must be getting back to the company; so mount."

This, however, was easier said than done. If I had killed my buffalo at the first fire, it would have been an easy matter to get back, as we were then not very far from where we started; but by the time I had discharged my third shot, the distance had greatly increased, and with it the difficulty of finding our companions. We did find them, though, by going

back to the spot where we had first flushed the game. Here, all who had not joined in the chase had halted, till the hunt was over. When we got back, some of them who had pursued the buffalo were there, and the others came dropping in, one by one.

The jaded appearance of the horses told of the severe gallop they had taken, and as it was not long to night, we journeyed but a mile farther, to the banks of a small stream of water, and pitched our tent. In the meantime, all who had been successful in the hunt, took pack-horses and went after their beef. We had a feast in camp that night, and in our particular mess, with such a man as Tom Harper, and with other *choice spirits*, never did time pass so merrily.


I often recur, even now, to the nights I passed with Tom on the prairie. Since then, I've sat at the festive board where, in rooms of the most gorgeous furnishing, was gathered the choicest and rarest luxuries which money could procure, and where were wine, and wit, and eloquence—everything, in short, considered necessary to constitute a successful dinner ; yet at none of these have I ever felt more of the exhilaration of the heart, than in those jovial hours, spent with that erratic genius, who was my bosom friend and companion on this, my “western tour.”

When the rage of hunger, brought on by hard exercise, in the open air of the prairies, was appeased, and the camp fire blazed high, tempering, with its genial warmth, the chilliness of the October nights, then Tom, with a long-stemmed pipe in his mouth,

would recline on his buffalo robe, and pour out streams of talk, enriched with wit and broad humor, and rollicking gayety, on any subject which was introduced. Or, with his splendid voice, he would take the lead in a glee, which floated deliciously on the night air.

Again, he would give us bits of his experience in Europe; especially of that portion of his life which he spent at the University of Heidelberg. Never was there one better calculated to captivate a young man, than Tom. He had seen life in all its phases, from the highest to the lowest, in the most polished European society, and among the roughest, wildest, backwoods companions. His conversation was interesting in the extreme, and generally, it was gay and careless; but occasionally, as the reader will perceive, there ran through it a vein of bitterness. He seemed to consider his past life as a failure; that he had lived without accomplishing anything, and now he was without an object—or, at least, his only object was to kill time.

. It must be acknowledged that he succeeded in this very well. I became thoroughly acquainted with him, and I believe he was generally a happy man; but sometimes the thought that he was serving no purpose, save that of amusing himself and a few associates, would excite regret the deepest and keenest; and most vindictively did he assail the system, or whatever it might be called, which caused him to occupy the position of which he was at times so impatient.



He was one of a class which exists in the South. In this section of the United States, however humiliating the confession is to me, as a Southerner, it must be acknowledged that there is scarcely such a thing as literature.* The profession which, elsewhere, furnishes employment, ample pecuniary remuneration, and gratifying fame, to so many, is here unknown. There are one or two professed and successful authors in the Southern States ; but this fact does not disprove my general proposition, any more than the existence of the Siamese twins proves that men are generally born in pairs.

There is not a publishing concern in all this region which can give currency to a book, save, perhaps, some religious houses, and even these cannot bring a work into that general circulation which is gratifying to an author. No parallel to this case exists, or ever has existed, in the wide world. Nowhere else on the globe is there so extended a territory, or so large a population, ranking with enlightened nations, where such a thing as literature is almost unknown.

Everywhere else, there are numerous roads to distinction ; here, there is only one—politics. All who have the least taste for this pursuit enter the broad road, which differs from the one mentioned in Holy Writ in this : that all those who start in it do not reach their goal, though they may strive for it during a long life.

*Since writing this, the author has ceased to entertain the opinion here expressed.

The way, then, is crowded, and all who do not choose it—and a great many who do—are necessarily consigned to oblivion. Many are the men of talent and polished education, calculated to stamp their impress on the age, who, disgusted with the “wild hunt,” and the crowds engaged in it, refuse to participate; who, with the capacity and inclination to shine in the world of letters, make no effort to do so, because, for lack of facilities at home, they would be forced to leave their much loved section, to seek for those aids necessary to the accomplishment of their wishes.

Such men, with tastes the most cultivated and refined, find no literary society in which to gratify their love of letters, seek in various ways to kill the time which hangs heavily on their hands, and to destroy the consciousness that they are living, and destined to die in oblivion. Some retire to their plantations—I speak of those who are blessed with competency—and devote themselves to agriculture, and reading, without the first attempt at writing. Some travel. Some, alas! become wretchedly dissipated.

It must be confessed that the class I’ve described is quite a small one. The number of men in the South capable of excelling in letters is large; those who fail to enter the “wild, exciting chase” of politics are few. Crowds press in it.

“Hark! ’tis the bugle’s clarion call!
Hark! on the office hunters fall
Its echoes, lingering in mid air,
From Walker, down to swampy Ware

Mount Yonah trembles in the blast,
 While on the ocean many a mast
 Its pennons flutters on the gale,
 And swells to bursting, every sail ;
 It is Horatio winds his horn,
 And huntamen brave salute the morn.
 As snorting chargers dash away,
 Upon the wild and fierce foray,
 Their riders raise a deafening cry,
 That shakes the earth and rends the sky.

* * * * *

All office seekers join the chase,
 And 'tis a wild and frenzied race ;
 Away they go, with thundering speed—
 Horatio blowing in the lead ;
 O'er hill, and dell, and stream, they fly,
 As if the devil followed nigh ;
 No rest for them, by night or day,
 Away they rush, away, away."

Tom Harper had never embarked in politics himself.

"But I had a brother who did," said he to me, one night, after the rest of the camp had fallen asleep, leaving him and me sitting by a few dying embers ; "I had a brother who joined in the 'wild hunt,' and his experience was just as useful to me as if it had been my own."

"And what conclusion did you draw from it ?" I asked.

"This: that politicians are fully as selfish and treacherous as the members of fashionable society. Indeed, they are much worse men. The large majority of them have self-aggrandizement in view all the time. That is their only object."

"There are surely some exceptions, Tom."

"Yes, this kind of exceptions: I have just said that the most of them have only one object—self-aggrandizement. There are others who have *two* objects in view—the elevation of themselves into office, and the good of the country."

"You mention the good of the country last. Do you mean by this that it is a secondary consideration?"

"I certainly do."

"I must think your judgment harsh. Surely, we have some pure patriots."

"We may have patriots—leaving off the pure."

"I hardly understand you. There certainly are statesmen in this glorious Republic ready to sacrifice their interest, their fame, their all—who are ready to 'drop their blood for drachmas' in the service of their beloved country."

Tom looked at me, while I was speaking, with a melancholy, pitying gaze, and when I was done, he smoked a few moments in silence.

"Hopeton," he began, at length, "it is always an unpleasant task to undeceive a youth full of hope and enthusiasm, like yourself, though I am convinced that to do it is an act of friendship. However, experience is almost the only teacher to which men will listen; but, whenever I hear language like that you have just used, I think of what Eugene Aram said when he heard such a burst as yours, from a young man: 'Poor boy! How gallantly the ship leaves the

port ! How worn and battered it will return !” Let me tell you what I know to be a fact. Whenever a man becomes a confirmed politician, his own advancement is the *primary* object, to which *all others* must yield. With some, the second object is the prosperity of those who happen to stand in the relation of friends to them. With others, the good of the country comes next to self.

“ To state it in other words, they serve themselves first, and then they are willing to serve their country, or their associates ; and, even then, they are sure to help those most able, or most willing, to return the favor ; so it resolves itself into one continued effort for self, at last. They talk of consistency ! They are consistent in one thing—devotion to their own interests. The fools ! The miserable demagogues ! And one of them says he ‘ *never* changes ; times, and men, and parties may change, but he *never* changes. He is the immaculate Julius Cæsar Andrew Jackson—the unchanged and the unchangeable.’ Such insufferable vanity ! Such *loathsome* self-conceit !

“ But I am wandering from my point ; yet one thing more. The instances of astounding vanity among politicians are numerous. One of them said : ‘ I was born insensible to fear !’ The man who is ‘ insensible to fear ’ is an idiot !”

“ There are statesmen, however,” said I, “ who entertain the same opinions, and the same principles, during their whole lives.”

“ Because,” answered Tom, “ their political advancement requires it.”

"No ; frequently they have been in a minority."

"Then, they had sagacity enough to see, or imagine they saw, that their opinions would one day be adopted by the majority, and they would then occupy vantage ground, from the fact that they had always been consistent. To say that a politician is consistent, is to say nothing in his favor. Consistent to what ? To truth ? To honest principle ? If so, then it is praise ; but if you merely mean that he is firm in his adherence to a party, or a particular set of dogmas, under all circumstances, then you disparage him. For, is any man infallible ? Is it not possible for every one to form an erroneous judgment ? and shall he, because he has once committed himself to mistaken views, always continue to entertain them ?"

"I admit that a man should not sacrifice truth to *such* consistency, Tom ; but, even this, you will allow, is better than the course pursued by some ; that is, to watch the way the tide of popular opinion sets, and regulate their course altogether by that."

"I do not see it so. Some men remain blindly, and stolidly, and stubbornly in one position, where they can effect nothing, when, by shifting a little, they might gain a stand-point from which to operate for good. Others watch the current, throw themselves upon it, even though they know it is going wrong, in the hope that they may be able to direct it right. They are willing to journey a little out of the way, with a crowd, that they may finally win it back to the right path.

"All this they will do, and serve their country, if, at the same time, they can serve themselves. They even prefer to serve their country, at the same time that they serve themselves, provided 'they can do both—and that is the extent of their patriotism. If self, or country, must be thrown overboard, country goes first.

"The worst fault of politicians, though, is the readiness with which they sacrifice a friend on the altar of interest, or ambition. This, however, is a sin common to the human family; and, perhaps, I do wrong to insinuate that politicians are more guilty of it than others."

"Oh, Tom!" I here exclaimed, "this will *not* do. You accuse fashionable people of heartlessness and selfishness; and I thought, perhaps, your experience might justify your assertions. You said that self was the primary object with politicians, and you may have good reason for thinking so; but, when you assert that no such thing as disinterested friendship exists, I must enter my protest."

"Did I not tell you it was a melancholy task to undeceive a youth with reference to the character of the people who compose this world? Remember the conversation of to-night; and when you arrive at the age which I have reached, if I am living, let me know what you think of these things. But, let me explain myself. There may be such a thing as friendship; but of *friends*, I have known only two, in my life. While there is a unity of interest between two men,

they entertain for each other the sentiment called friendship. Let there be a conflict of interests, and they are no longer friends. This conflict must be greater or less, according to the strength of the bond by which they had been united."

"You certainly color darkly," said I, "and my experience is too limited to set against yours. My father, though, is older than you, and has known all sorts of people; still, he does not think so badly of mankind as you do."

"He has been more fortunate. His friends never were subjected to the test severe enough to destroy their friendship. Recollect, however, I still believe I have met with *two* friends in my life."

"They were not politicians, or fashionables, though?"

"No; I haven't time to tell you about them now, for we have but a short time to sleep. Besides, I don't want to talk in such a strain any longer. Good-night."

"Good-night, then."

Chapter Seventh.

WE all know that negroes generally have very flat, unintelligent-looking features, and the blacker the darkey, the more animal-like the countenance. When we see among the sons of Ham a face indicating the existence of mind, the bright color attendant on it almost always betrays the admixture of European blood. Sometimes, however, we find the unmitigated blackness of complexion belonging to the African, together with the prominent nose and general appearance of *humanity*, which characterize the Caucasian race.

Negroes so distinguished are smart and shrewd, to an astonishing degree ; and, too frequently, they are scoundrels, in proportion to their intelligence. Occasionally, though, they are faithful and honest. It may well be imagined that, in this case, they are invaluable.

My man Howard belonged to this latter class. He was strictly honest—and those who know negroes are well aware that stealing prevails among them to a greater extent than any other crime. I could trust him with anything. We were raised together, and he was my playmate from the time I could crawl. He not only served me as a master, but assisted me with the affection due a friend. As a valet, I never had to chide him, for he had all a negro's pride, and delighted in seeing me so dressed as to excel my associates.

In a word, his happiness seemed to consist in anticipating my wishes and supplying my wants. Being *apt*—remarkably quick of perception—wherever I went, into whatever new society or mode of life, he soon learned everything necessary to comfort and convenience, and that in all the shorter time, because he applied himself to it voluntarily, as to the acquirement of an accomplishment. This may account for the eulogium bestowed on him—and which he richly deserved—by Captain Preston.

A short time after our first meeting with the buffalo we halted for another day.

“Jack,” said Tom Harper, “suppose we have our horses saddled, and take a hunt.”

“What shall we hunt?” I asked.

“Oh, anything we can find—deer, buffalo, wild horse, panther, or Indian.”

“As to the last three, I don’t see that we can do much with them. The panthers or the Indians either, might prove troublesome customers, and wild horses would laugh at us.”

“Ah, you’ve never seen me throw the lasso?”

“No.”

“Then, I hope you will see it to-day.”

“Why, Tom, I had no idea you possessed *this* accomplishment, although I have already learned to look on you as an Admirable Crichton.”

“You do not know how ambitious I am, Jack. In all my wanderings, I have endeavored to learn those things best calculated to win applause. At college I

pored over Greek and Latin. Entering on fashionable life, I studied dancing, music, the art of dressing, and all those little things, to excel in which gives one a name among the *inaniti* of society. Among the fast young men, I learned billiards, &c. Shooting, I always loved, and horsemanship is as natural to a Southerner as walking. When I commenced backwoods life, my shooting was the only thing which excited the admiration of my companions. They looked on good riding as a matter of course. So I set myself to work to acquire all sorts of frontier accomplishments. Skill with the lasso is highly regarded by prairie men."

"Well, what kind of arms shall we carry?"

"Rifles, and *the rest*, of course, Congo," continued Tom, addressing his servant, an old campaigner. "Saddle the *Burnt Tail* for me, and *Black Paddy* for yourself. See if the guns want cleaning; though I think they do not."

"They are in first rate order, sir," answered Congo, "but I'll rub 'em up a little."

"Get my trappings ready, too, Howard," said I; "just such as Congo prepares for his master."

"You'll take Howard along, wont you, Jack?"

"Certainly."

"Hinks," said Tom, addressing the old huntsman, "we are going to leave everything in your charge, while we, like gallant knights, go forth in quest of adventure."

"All right," was the reply; "I'll take good care

of everything here—better care, I'm afraid, than you two youngsters 'll take care of yourselves."

"What! you old goose! don't I know as much as you do?"

"*Prehaps* you may."

"Well, can't you take care of yourself?"

"Sometimes."

"Well, what on earth are you talking about? Ah! you're sullen, I see."

"You are mistaken. I aint so sullen as not to warn a man who has befriended me, when I see him about to go into danger—if he *does* speak cross to me."

"I beg your pardon, Hinks. But what is it, man? We want to go."

"Well, I suppose you know we've got to the Injun country."

"I supposed we were very near it."

"Seems to me, then, that's enough to keep you from going off by yourself."

"By myself? Why, Jack Hopeton is going, and his man Howard, and my man Congo."

"I believe, from what I've seen of Mr. Jack Hopeton, that he'll do to tie to; but then he's monstrous young and tender."

"Don't be uneasy on my account, friend Hinks," said I, rather tartly. "I beat you killing deer, any way."

"So you did, but 'twan't nothin' but the devil's luck helped you to do it."

"I told you, old fellow, that I stalked my deer fairly and squarely, and now, 'darn ye!' you talk about luck."

"One of 'em you did, but I wonder if I didn't drive 'tother right into the muzzle of your gun?"

"Yes, you did, after letting the prettiest sort of a chance slip, without killing anything."

"Come, Jack," broke in Tom, "there's no use talking to that jealous old cock any longer. The horses are ready; let's go."

The steeds were standing some distance off, ready saddled, and we started toward them.

"Have you got a lasso for me, Tom?" I asked.

"Yes," was the reply; "I thought you'd as well begin to learn now, as any time."

"Mr. Tom Harper," interrupted Hinks, once more, "I've got something to say to you."

"Well," said Tom, irritated, "why don't you speak out. I've been trying all the time to get you to *disgorge*."

"*Jim Shirley has got leave to go hunting to-day.*"

"Who?" said Tom, quickly, turning pale.

"Jim Shirley."

"Where is Jim Shirley?"

"Here, in camp. He's one of the rangers."

"Why, I've seen them all, and Jim Shirley is *not* among them."

"He is."

"Which is he?"

"It's that dark, mean-looking scamp, with the long gray beard, and only one eye."

"Indeed! Well, I've caught that one eye fixed on me several times, and now I recollect that each time it set me to thinking, though it always looked away as soon as I encountered it steadily. I believe, now, that you are right."

"I know I'm right; but I want to have some private chat with you."

"Speak out. I'm willing for Jack to hear all about it."

"Well, I've known Jim all the while, and—"

"Why didn't you tell me before now that he was in the company?"

"Because he told me he would behave himself, and let you alone; so I thought, as long as he kept his promise, telling you about his being along would do no good; but it seems you rode by him 'tother day and killed the buffalo he was after, and that little thing raised his *Irish* again. I was close to him, and heard him swear that he'd cut your comb the first time he caught you away from the camp, after we got among the Injuns, so everybody would think they done it. Well, last night he was prowling about, and *heerd* you say you wás goin' out to-day, and he went right straight to Captain Preston, and got leave to go, too."

"We'll watch out for the gentleman, then," said Tom.

"I wish you wouldn't go out. You know what a devil Jim Shirley is when he gets started."

"Yes; and that is why he must be settled. I shall go now just to give him a chance to commence his game. I'm tired of him, and if he is not careful, he'll get his *quietus* to-day."

"If we are going, then," said I, "let's be off."

"Every man knows his own business best," again spoke our old hunter. "I've warned ye, and I 'spose you'll do your own way."

"You know what you'd do, Hinks," answered Tom, "if you were in my place. *You'd* never shirk; and you can't expect me to do it. Much obliged to you for your warning, though."

"Well, let one of these darkies stay at the tent, and let me go with you. I may do some good."

"I would, but for one thing. If Jim Shirley sees you with us, he won't attack me. I want him to do whatever he is intending, to-day. *The thing must be settled.* He shall dog me no longer."

We mounted and rode off toward the south, where Tom said we should find some wooded hills. We passed by the rangers, and saw the one-eyed fellow putting his rifle together, having, apparently, just cleaned it. Looking back as we went on, we saw him following us with his eye, and when we had left the camp a quarter of a mile, he also got on his horse, and galloped off in the direction contrary to that we had taken.

"It all works right," said my companion. "That scoundrel knows the geography of this country well, and is fully aware of my destination. He will be at the hills before us, waiting to shoot me down."

"You look a little mystified, Jack," he continued, "and I'll enlighten you, in a few words. Once, in the course of my frontier adventures, this man Shirley, a violent drunken bully, in a fit of intoxication, was offering insult to a pretty Indian maiden whom I had seen several times selling moccasins, and in whose favor I had been prepossessed, by her simple grace and modesty of demeanor. It happened that the girl's lover was present, and although boiling with indignation, he feared to resent, in a becoming manner, in the presence of so many white men, the indignity offered by Shirley.

"Still, he could not help rushing in between his sweetheart and the overbearing white man. Enraged at this, Shirley presented his rifle, and a moment more would have beheld the Indian a corpse. I happened to be in rather a desperate mood that day, and, besides, my natural sense of justice would not allow me to witness cold-blooded butchery; so, just as the brute pulled the trigger of his rifle, I struck the latter up, and the bullet whistled over the head of the intended victim.

"Without a word, the baffled murderer turned on me with his clubbed gun. If I had been in a good humor, I should have sprung out of his way and showed him the muzzle of my repeater, to keep him at bay. As it was, when he raised his arm to strike, I caught it in that position with my left hand, and with my right inserted about an inch and a half of a bowie-knife into his side.

"He struggled and drew another bowie. I saw he was in earnest, and believed I should be forced to kill him, but just then the bystanders interfered and stopped the proceedings.

"I thought that when he got sober, he would be willing to drop the matter but instead of that he swore vengeance on me. He went off, though, soon after, and I did not know what had become of him. He has turned up again, now, and I don't think I'll be annoyed by him any longer."

"Look! look! marse Jack," exclaimed Howard, at this juncture—"look at the horses!"

"Sure enough!" said Tom. "Take my rifle, Congo. Now, Jack, follow me."

Off he went, and I, giving my gun to Howard, followed his example. We were by far the best mounted men in the company. In fact, our horses were almost thorough-bred, so we felt confident of overtaking the fleetest wild steed on the prairies. The objects of our chase were quietly grazing, with their heads turned from us, when we started, and we got very near before they were aware of our approach. Suddenly, they threw up their heads, and turned to gaze. A moment they stood with distended nostrils, and manes waving in the breeze, as if to satisfy themselves of our intentions.

Nothing could present a nobler appearance than did these free, wild inhabitants of the prairies, as they stood thus, beholding the intruders on their domain. I was surprised that they allowed us to ride so close;

but finally they wheeled and thundered off over the plain. Tom selected a dappled gray, the finest looking horse in the herd, and pressed after him.

"You see that black colt, Jack?" said he.

"Yes."

"Well, put after him."

"Never mind; I know I can't do anything with him, so I'll follow you, and see your operation."

"Come on, then."

The buffalo chase was exciting enough; but so far as pace was concerned, it was slow, compared with this. We soon passed most of the herd, and they scattered in different directions; but in spite of the blood we rode, the gallant gray still kept ahead.

"He's making for the hills, Jack, and if he gets there I'll give him up, for I must be looking out for Jim Shirley when we get there."

"How far are the hills?" I asked.

"About a mile."

"Well, we are gaining a little."

"I believe we are. Get up, Burnt Tail?"

We were now closing the gap between us and our "game," and soon were near enough for Tom to twirl his lasso. He threw it once and missed, because the gray dodged. Again, it just hung on one ear. The third time the wild horse was noosed.

"Now, Jack, if you want some of the fun," said Tom, "let me give you the end of this rope."

"Willingly," I answered.

But this was easier said than done, for the touch

of the lasso had got a new rate of speed out of the frightened gray, and as we all three were tearing along at a killing pace, Tom, in trying to give me the end of his thong, dropped it.

"Just let me see if I can't pick it up," said I.

"Go it, then, but give me yours."

"Here it is."

A hard struggle I had for it, but finally succeeded. A few more bounds, and Tom, riding on the side opposite me, threw the other lasso. Then commenced a regular row. Tom was an old hand, and knew how to jerk and tease a horse into submission ; but he said he had never lassoed so powerful an animal, and, though there was no chance for the horse to get away, he afforded us plenty of sport and exercise.

We worried him down, however, and turned toward the camp. Meeting our servants, Tom gave his captive to Congo to carry back, and we dismounted to breathe our tired horses. Once more we started toward the hills.

"I think," said Tom, "we could find deer here, or, perhaps, a panther, but that scoundrel has spoiled our hunt for to-day."

"Wouldn't it be best," I asked, "to take Hinks before the captain, let him give information, and arrest your man?"

"No," answered my companion, in a calm tone ; but his eye flashed, and his lips were pressed closely. "No ; that would be temporizing. I would not trouble myself to explain the thing to every one ; but

I rather think you and I are destined to become friends, and I am anxious that you shall understand me. The fact is, although I pass for a courageous man, I am afraid for Shirley to live. I am uneasy while he continually threatens my life."

"Well," answered I, "you have doubtless looked at the matter in every light, and are more competent to decide what is your best course, than I am, so I say no more."

We soon came to the hills.

"I must ride round, and see where the hound has passed," said Tom.

"Can I help you?" inquired I.

"Yes. But Congo can help you to help me. Let Howard go with me, while you take my servant, and pass round in the other direction; but don't enter the wood. Let a rifle shot be the signal that the trail is found."

We parted company, taking different directions. Congo and I looked eagerly for horse tracks, but found none. Soon the sharp crack of a rifle was heard, and at the signal, we retraced our steps, continuing round, in the direction in which Tom had started. We found the latter, with Howard, sitting on his horse, some distance from the foot of the first hill.

"Here is where our man passed," said he, as Congo and I rode up.

"I can't say that I see the sign," was my reply, as I looked with all my might. "How the mischief can you see a horse's track in this long grass?"

"Congo, can't you show Mr. Hopeton the trail?"

"Yes, sir," answered the darkey. "Here it is, sir," he continued, placing his hand upon the exact spots where the hoofs had crushed the herbage.

"I must acknowledge," said I, "that if Congo had not gone with me to look for 'signs' I should have done a poor business at it."

"So I knew," said my friend.

"But what will you do now?"

"Do you see that large tree, yonder, with the branches sweeping the ground, surrounded by an almost impenetrable thicket?"

"Yes."

"Well, Shirley's horse is tied under it."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he neighed when I first rode up, and I saw the branches shake. The assassin dog thought he would enter on the side next the camp, and so he came all the way round here to fasten his horse."

"Do you suppose he is also under the same cover?"

"Not now. After hiding his horse, as he thought, he commenced ranging the hills on foot, seeking an opportunity to slay me."

"I don't know that I exactly understand your intention, Tom. Do you intend to poke along through the woods, and let this fellow shoot you like a dog?"

"There's nothing farther from my intention. I expected to send you all on ahead to drive the wood, making a noise to draw Shirley out of cover, while I followed behind, at a distance sufficient to prevent

his being frightened out of his intention by you. If I had gone before, you know, he might have shot me down like a dog, sure enough. After you had gone ahead a good way, I should have attracted my gentleman's attention, and then, 'each man for himself, and God over all.'"

"But I have a better plan than that," continued Tom. "We wasted so much time after that wild horse, that Shirley has doubtless grown tired waiting for me. No doubt he heard my rifle and will soon be back this way. You, then, must ride past that point in the wood, conceal yourselves, and wait the event. If you are in sight, no attack will be made."

"Surely, though, you are not going to stand here, and wait for that fellow to take a fair shot at you?"

"Can't I get behind my horse? I am obliged to you for your solicitude, Jack, but you are young yet. I am an old stager, and know how to take care of myself."

It was useless to say more, and I went to take the station assigned me, managing to conceal myself, and still have a full view of Tom and the place where he had told me the horse was hidden. Soon after I had reached the stand, my friend seemed to change his plan a little, for he rode some distance down the line of forest, and entered it, passing out of my sight. Gazing with painful intensity, I soon saw the face of the sinister-looking dog, Shirley, peering from the afore-mentioned thicket. He looked around cautiously and anxiously.

While he was reconnoitring, I saw Tom Harper emerge from his retreat, and walk a step or two into the prairie, gazing intently on the ground. Shirley saw him at the same moment, and instinctively raised his rifle. Mine was brought up full as quickly, but the distance was too great for either of us to do any execution, and this was perceived by the skulking scoundrel, who immediately lowered his piece, and slunk back.

Tom began to approach the spot where his enemy was concealed. I could stand it no longer, and commenced crawling toward the scene of action. But, though one would have said that Tom was merely looking for a trail, as he kept his eyes fixed on the ground, I noticed that he entered the wood again, before he came within the range of Shirley's rifle.

When I finally halted, the thicket was almost impenetrable to the eye ; but a little way off the woods were much more open. Happening to look in that direction, what was my astonishment, to see a hideous-looking Indian, crouching behind the trunk of a huge tree, and watching the spot where Shirley was lurking. Here was a situation ! The ranger, concealed, as he thought, waiting his opportunity to send his leaden messenger of death to the heart of the man he hated ; that man, conscious of his intention, and endeavoring to draw his fire ; the Indian, apparently, seeking an opportunity to steal upon the would-be assassin, while I, hidden from all three, viewed the movements of all.

Presently, the Indian crept stealthily from his tree, and moved toward Shirley's post. Soon a thicket intervened between him and me, and I could no longer see him. At the spot where Tom was last seen by me, the branches of the trees were occasionally shaken, and sometimes a hand, or the skirt of a coat, protruded itself into view. So intent was Shirley on watching all these manifestations, that an army might have come upon him unawares.

At last, he once more slowly raised his rifle. Never in my life was I more agitated. I did not wish to kill the man, but I was unwilling for him to have a shot at my friend, although I believe the latter knew what he was about, and was probably trying to draw the enemy's fire by exhibiting his cap, or some other part of his dress, as a target. I was a good marksman, however, and almost resolved to prevent the possibility of murder, by aiming a bullet at the body of Shirley.

While I was debating the question with myself, the clear report of a rifle echoed through the wood, and Jim Shirley, leaping straight upward, fell at full length on the ground. A glance showed me whence the diversion had come. A slight wreath of smoke was curling round the thicket where I had last seen the Indian, and it was not long before his form emerged from its concealment, and approached the body of the fallen white man.

At the same time, Tom and I started toward the scene of action, I thinking there could hardly be

much danger in an Indian, with an empty rifle, against two men as well provided with firearms as we were. With brandished tomahawk, the red man continued to approach his fallen foe, when, just as he reached the spot, he perceived us. Apparently, he determined not to lose the trophy of his exploit; so, hastily drawing his scalping-knife, he tore the reeking scalp from the head of the luckless Shirley, and, springing to one side, bounded off with the speed of an antelope, at the same time raising his horrid war-whoop.

I waited to see what action Tom would take. At first, he leaned on his rifle, gazing at the form of the Indian, as he darted off through the thicket; but when that fierce yell rang on the air, he brought his rifle quickly to his face and fired. The dusky warrior sped on, unharmed. The trees stood far too thick, even for Tom's skill. My chance was better, as but few trees were in the space between me and the course taken by the red skin. I followed my friend's example, and sent a bullet after our flying foe. Unlike the first, it did execution, for the Indian clapped his hand to his side, stumbled to his knees, recovered himself, ran blindly and staggeringly a few paces, stumbled again, and—fell prostrate.

"Well done, Jack!" cried Tom. "You are as good a shot as any of us; and then, you are the luckiest mortal in the world."

"But, why did you shoot at him?" I inquired, "when he had just killed the man who was trying to assassinate you?"

"Because the devil raised that infernal war-whoop. He was merely a scout, and his party will be on us in a twinkling. Load your rifle, and to horse! Quick!"

We loaded as quickly as the prospect of an encounter with an Indian war-party could force us.

"Now," said Tom, "get on Charley's back as soon as may, and ride for the camp."

I hastened toward the spot where I had left the negroes; and, as I did so, heard the tramp of a party of horse galloping through the forest. Soon after, the yells of a troop of Indians imparted unnatural speed to my footsteps. As I struck out into the plain, accompanied by Congo and Howard, I heard a war-whoop in answer to that of the party coming down the hill. Looking in the direction whence it came, what was my horror to see a dozen mounted warriors sweeping round the very spot where Tom had tied his horse; and, worse still, I saw the latter, having broken loose, scouring across the prairie.

The party behind came rushing down like a whirlwind, having caught a glimpse of us through the trees. I thought of the terrible fate which awaited my friend, provided he fell into the hands of the savages, and how recreant it would be in me to leave him. I turned my horse's head toward the wood. A moment's reflection, however, convinced me that, by remaining, I should merely bring destruction on my own head, without the least chance of rescuing Tom. I saw the Indians dive into the wood, and soon knew,

by their shouts of exultation, that they had effected a capture.

Not a moment was to be lost. Regard for my own safety urged me to place as great a distance as possible between myself and the blood-thirsty wretches in pursuit of me ; and the thought that the only chance to save Tom's life was by bringing the rangers to his aid, speeded my flight. For my own safety, I felt little apprehension, as I knew that the mustangs would be easily shaken off by the blooded animals ridden by myself and the negroes. The Indians, as they came tearing and yelling in our rear, soon perceived this, and, discharging their rifles at us, they gave up the pursuit.

Turning to look at them, my first impulse was to give a random shot ; but the thought that it might exasperate them to treat their captive with greater cruelty than they otherwise would, restrained me ; and I galloped on. Arrived at the camp, I hurriedly told our adventure to Captain Preston, and entreated that he would order the rangers to the rescue. It needed no urging to induce the excellent captain to issue hasty orders.

"What was the number of Indians?" he asked.

"As nearly as I could judge," was my answer, "about thirty in all. Certainly not more."

"Then forty of us will go. They must see that resistance will be useless, in order for us to rescue Tom alive."

"But they have a long way the start of us, captain."

"That is true, and I am uneasy about poor Tom ; but we must 'hope on, hope ever.'"

We soon started, I on a fresh horse, and went thundering along at a rapid pace. The idea that we might not be able to overtake the savages, or that they might take a notion to torture their captive before we could interfere in his behalf, rendered me almost frantic, and I could see that although Captain Preston maintained a calm exterior, it was at the cost of a mighty effort.

"Poor Tom!" said he, "I have lost several brothers in my life ; but even their death did not afflict me more than would that of my bosom friend."

"Let us not talk of it, captain," I said ; "but *do* urge the troop a little faster."

"All our horses are not thorough-bred, Jack ; and the speed is now as great as they can bear, considering the distance they have to go."

"I know you are right. I am half crazy, though, at the idea that even now they may be preparing the stake for our friend."

"They will not precipitate the matter. Indians are never in haste to deal with their captives. They will take him to their camp, and hold a grand *pow-wow* before they decide on his fate."

"But, captain, how will we be able to know the course they take?"

"Oh, the trail made by such a party will be so plain, a child might follow it. But, see yonder, Jack. A horseman comes galloping toward us."

"Sure enough!"

We both gazed eagerly. Our pace was not slackened, and the man on horseback neared us rapidly. His appearance was familiar, and I turned to direct an inquiring glance toward the captain. He had turned to me for the same purpose.

"I hardly dare ask, Jack," said he, "but *is* it—*can* it be—Tom?"

"I do believe it is," answered I, "or some one vastly like him."

The horseman waved his cap, and shouted. He approached nearer, and all doubt was removed. We recognized Tom Harper, and an exultant huzza went up, as he galloped in among us. We grasped his hands.

"Oh, Tom!" were my first words, "what do you think of my deserting you?"

"Think!" said he, "why, you came off to bring the rangers to my assistance, did you not?"

"Certainly, I did."

"Well, I think you acted very wisely."

"But I felt very mean about it. My first impulse was to ride back, and die with you, after slaying as many of the red skins as possible."

"Which would have been very quixotic and foolish."

"I acknowledge it."

"How, in the name of common sense," asked Captain Preston, "did you think that would mend the matter?"

"I didn't think—at first. As soon as I *did* think, I changed my plan."

"Well, you *did* think then. But, Tom, how did you get loose from the Indians?"

"Let's start back, and I'll tell you."

The order for a counter-march was given, and as we rode along, Tom first gave the captain an account of his old adventure with Shirley and the Indians, then of our morning's work.

"When I went to get my horse," he continued, "and found he was gone, I tried to hide, and might have succeeded, if the cursed Indians had not sent part of their force around to cut off our retreat. As luck would have it, they were riding along, and saw my horse burst out from his cover. Of course, they rode in, and scattered, to find the horse's rider. I was soon discovered; and yielded myself a prisoner."

"Without a blow?" inquired I.

"Certainly. What would you have had me do?"

"Why, it seems to me, when I found my case a hopeless one, I would, at least, have shown them what a desperate white man, well armed, can do."

"You've got a great deal to learn, Jack, as all boys have. Had my case been desperate, I might have acted as you suggest; but this was not so, as the sequel has proven."

"I again stand corrected."

"Well," resumed Tom, "I was bound, and buffeted about considerably by the younger war-

riors ; and then the greater part of my captors joined in the chase after you, and the darkies. They all soon gave it over as a bad job, you know, and then they returned to me, in no very good humor at your escape. I was in rather low spirits, I confess. They all gathered round in a ring to stare at me. Suddenly, one of them approached, and said ; ‘ White man, know me ?’

“ His face seemed familiar, but I could not recollect where I had seen him. He continued : ‘ White man friend to me once. He forget me. I no forget him. Indian no forget friend. You keep bad white man from shootin’ me.’

“ Suddenly, I recollected him. He was the Indian whom I had protected when Shirley sought his life, and now I was repaid. He was in authority, and, after making a speech to his companions in his own language, he loosed my bonds. They allowed me to take Shirley’s horse, and I galloped back as fast as possible to relieve you of all apprehension on my account.”

“ You were lucky,” said Captain Preston.

“ I think, Tom,” said I, “ we had better stay close to camp during the rest of our sojourn in Indian land.”

“ I ’spect you’ll listen to me, next time,” growled old Hinks, who had ridden near enough to hear most of our conversation.

Chapter Eighth.

I HAD my fill of adventure on the prairies. I shot the buffalo; I learned to noose the wild horse; I fought the Indian on more than one occasion; and, finally, we turned our faces homeward. Reaching the station whence we had started, I there bade adieu to my friends. I rejoiced the heart of our huntsman, old Hinks, by presenting him with my best horse.

"Much obliged to you, for 'Charley,'" said the old fellow. "I never was much afraid of the Injuns, and now I can be just as *sassy* to them as I please, for there is nothing on the prairie that can keep up with this horse."

"I am glad you are pleased with him," said I. "Whenever he bears you out of danger, just think of me."

"I will; but when shall we see you out this way again?"

"Never, I expect."

"What! Why, I thought from the kindness you showed for our way of life, you'd fell in love with it."

"I love it well enough; but I must now fill another station in life. I've got to go to college, yet."

"I wonder ef you are going to college! Ef you do, you'll be *spilte*, by gosh!"

"I hope not, Hinks."

"Yes, you will. You've got the right sort of grit

to make a man, but college larnin' will *spile* you. See ef it don't."

"Well, when I get through my course, I believe I'll come back, just to show I am not *spille*."

"'Taint worth while. But I needn't skeer myself. Ef you go to college, you won't come back here. *Don't* go," continued the old fellow, earnestly and entreatingly. "*Don't* go. I likes you, and I don't want to see sich a good stick *spille*."

"Hinks," here interposed Tom Harper, "do you think a man can't be *college larnt*, and a good woodsman besides?"

"That's jest what I think."

"You are mistaken, then."

"No, sir; I've been hunting a long while, and I've seen' these college-bred chaps come out here many a time to hunt, but they were just as tender and no count as raw 'tater."

"What do you think of me, as a hunter, Hinks?"

"You? You'll do. Ef Mr. Jack Hopeton here, would jest follow your example, he'd be a man."

"What do you think of Captain Preston?"

"He is the right sort, ef ever there was one."

"Well, now open your ears. We are both 'college bred.'"

"Is that a fact?" asked Hinks, after a pause of the utmost astonishment.

"It is a fact."

"Well!" again said the old huntsman, drawing a long breath, "that's the reason you missed that Injun 'tother day."

"And what made you miss the deer?"

"Durn the deer! I didn't miss 'em. My cursed gun wouldn't shoot. But yours did, and you missed, and let this youngster beat you. Let him go to college, though, an' come back, if you want to see him miss deer, an' Injuns, too."

"Never mind, you incorrigible old scamp, when we start out again, I intend to follow you, just to shoot down all the game you start."

"*Ef you ken.* I used to think you was able to do it; but sence I hear you are college-larnt, I think I can shoot better against you. But I've got to go."

Hinks came forward, and grasped my hand as in a vice.

"Good-by," he said, "I hope you'll change your notion 'bout goin' to college, yet; but any how, ef ever you come out this way agin, recollect old Hinks is ready to do anything he can for you."

"Even if I come from college?"

"Yes," was the reply, after a moment's hesitation.

"Good-by, then."

I regretted parting with Tom Harper and Captain Preston, exceedingly, and urged both to visit me, if ever they felt disposed to wander to old Georgia.

"You will never see me there," answered the captain. "I would like much to visit you, Jack; but my lot is cast out here. Tom there, however, is a perfect cosmopolite, and he had just as well go to Georgia occasionally as not."

"It is by no means improbable that you will receive a visit from me," said Tom.

"Do come, then. I think I can show you some people—numbers of so-called 'society'—who are possessed of the article called a heart."

"Perhaps," answered my friend, with a sad smile. "But Jack, I have never told you that I am a native of Georgia?"

"No."

"Well, I was born within forty miles of your country town."

"Is it possible? Well, I thought so noble a fellow must be a Georgian."

"I can't help feeling an affection for the State," was the answer, as a melancholy expression stole over my friend's countenance, and his fine eye assumed a dreaming, musing expression; "for the bones of my forefathers sleep there, together with those of my brothers and sisters. Ah!

" 'They softly lie and sweetly sleep
Low in the ground.'

while I am tossed on life's stormy ocean.

" 'Life is a sea, how fair its face,
How smooth its dimpling waters pace—
Its canopy how pure;
But rocks below, and tempests sleep,
Insidious o'er the glassy deep,
Nor leave an hour secure.'

"Oh! it is a hard, unsatisfactory thing—this we call human existence. But

“ ‘There is a calm for those who weep,
A rest for weary pilgrims found ;
They softly lie and sweetly sleep
Low in the ground.’ ”

Tom was completely lost in a reverie. I had seen him gay, dashing, impetuous, and I had witnessed the overflowing of bitterness from his heart ; but now, I saw him in still another light, and I almost loved him for this new feature in his character. A pensiveness almost holy seemed to envelop him with its influence, as he continued :

“ Yes, Jack, the place where I was born, and where sleep three generations of my ancestors, is still my property. Though the ungratefulness and want of toleration on the part of my father’s old friends caused me to shake off the very dust of my feet against them, my reverence for the memory of my parents, and my family pride, would not allow me to sell their graves. But I have not visited the spot for years. The house stands, no doubt, for it was of solid structure, and calculated to resist the attacks of time for a long series of years ; yet, the lands are uncultivated, and, what is worse, the graveyard must be overrun with weeds and briers, and the tombstones covered with moss.

“ It is strange. No doubt it seems to you shameful,” he continued, “ that I have not at least had an agent to keep the graveyard in order ; but I wanted the sacred spot preserved unprofaned by strange hands ; and, although I have not seen it with my



material eye for a great while, many are the mental pilgrimages I make to it, as the Mecca more holy than any other on earth."

"I trust, then," said I, "that now you are ready to go back; and I even indulge the hope that you may once more reside in your native State."

"It is not impossible, though hardly probable. Georgia is a noble State, in some respects; but, oh! there are so many things in which her children are wrong."

"Come back, then, and try to alter this state of things."

"And to do it—to have any influence or weight, I should be compelled to enter into politics. No, my friend—the very idea frightens me. If I go home, it will be to live a quiet, secluded life. 'The times' may be—nay—are 'out of joint,' but I was never 'born to set them right.' That 'cursed spite' is spared me."

"But somebody must do it."

"True; yet, hear me; I would not enter into party strife, expose myself to the bitter enmity, the malignant jealousy, the meanness, the treachery, of 'Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart,' for the empire of the world."

"If you really wish," continued he, "to persuade me to return, don't urge these things on me."

"I will certainly forbear. Come and live quietly, then, with your books, and friends, and dogs, and"—I added, slyly—"the pretty wife you must pick up."

“ Ah !” was the gay reply ; “ You tempt me now. Well do I remember the fair girls of your State. I have seen the beauties of Eastern Georgia, but they can’t be compared to those of *our* Georgia. I remember one, Jack, whom I loved. She was tall and commanding. I’ve looked on the queens and empresses of Europe, as well as the proudest dames of their aristocracy, and I’ve beheld the most celebrated beauties of our own sunny South—the land of beauty—the abiding-place of loveliness—but never have my eyes rested on one who looked and moved a queen as did Leonora —.

“ I said she was tall. She was above woman’s average height, but her form was almost perfect in its proportion. Her hair was very dark and luxuriant. Her features were as if chiselled by the hand of some more than human artist. It is rare to see so much regularity, and so much expression, united in the same face. A complexion which the most skilful painter on earth would strive in vain to transfer to canvas, and eyes of dark hazel—some would call them black—complete the picture, if we consider the description of her *physique* a portrait.

“ But the soul which beamed from those eyes ! No words can give you an idea of it. Often have I gazed into those unfathomable depths, those wellsprings of feeling, till the power to look away was taken from me, and I was perfectly fascinated and bewildered by their beauty. You think me extravagant—demented, perhaps ; but no human epithet

can do her justice. She was divinely beautiful—bewitchingly lovely—bewilderingly fascinating !”

“ By dear friend,” said I, “ what became of this paragon ?”

“ I know not. I have never inquired ; nor do I wish to discover, for I suppose she is long since married. I loved Leonora, Jack—loved her with all the depth of love of which man is capable ; loved her with a fervor wild and foolish ; and yet I never told my love !—I mean, never said to her in words that I loved her. My eyes betrayed it constantly. Believe me, and recollect this, for it may be of service to you—you cannot conceal your passion from her who is its object, if you indulge it as I did mine. You must crush it, smother it ; but do not hope to nurse it in your heart, and at the same time conceal it, merely by refraining from speaking of it.”

“ Why, I can hardly conceive, Tom, of circumstances which would render it necessary for me to conceal a love I wished to cherish.”

“ Nevertheless, Jack, such circumstances may exist, and did in my case ; but I cannot tell you more now. I hope to see you soon, in your own house, but I can set no time.”

“ I start to the University of Virginia,” answered I, “ soon after I get home, and will be in Georgia only during vacations, for the next three years. I hope, for your sake, Leonora is yet single ; or, if she is married, that you may find Georgia still has other beauties.”

And so Tom and I parted. I started for home, passing through Texas on my route. At Galveston, I found a letter from home. For a long, long time, I had been without tidings from my father and mother, and I eagerly broke the seal. I read, and staggered with emotion at the contents of my epistle. It was from my father, and contained a summons to come immediately home, if I would see my dear mother once more alive. Only those who have been placed in my situation can conceive of my feelings.

I immediately hastened to my hotel. Walking rapidly along, with my eyes fixed on the ground, I heard several persons approaching me, in conversation, and recognized a voice. It was impossible ever to forget those cold and measured tones, and I looked up to encounter the gaze of Lorraine. He knew me at a glance, and the old expression of cold-blooded malignity came over his face.

I was too much absorbed in grief, even to look defiance, and I passed quickly on, as he did not offer to address me. Turning an angle, I came suddenly upon two men engaged in a desperate conflict with bowie-knives. No one was near, though crowds from several quarters were hastening up, attracted by the noise of the fight. Just as I got close to the combatants, one of them bore the other against a wall, and was inflicting repeated and deadly stabs, while the victim shouted "murder," in the most harrowing tones.

For my life I could not resist the impulse to interfere, and I seized the arm which was doing the violence. As I did so, he who had shouted murder sank upon the ground. The crowd was collecting, and I saw in it the face of Lorraine, who had turned back to see the cause of the uproar. I could not bear the idea of being detained as a witness, when my mother might be dying, and breathing my name ; so I slipped into an alley, and continued my way to the hotel. Arrived there, I paid my bill, sent my baggage on board a steamer, which, luckily, was to sail that very day, and at that very hour, and was soon steaming away from Galveston.

The steamboat and the steam-car soon carried me to the railroad station near Hopeton. I went to the agent.

"Mr. Harris," I began.

"Why, halloo, Jack !" he broke out. "Got back from the West ?"

"Yes, sir ; back once more."

"And you had a pleasant trip, I suppose ; but you look haggard. Health been bad ?"

"I've had fine health, Mr. Harris," I answered, trying to gain courage to ask after my mother. "Have you heard from our family lately ?"

"Ah ! I see how it is ; you've heard bad news from home, poor fellow !"

"But how," I gasped, still fearing to ask the question, "how is my mother now ?"

"I am glad to relieve you, Jack. She is out of danger."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed, as I sank into a chair, and covered my face.

My meeting with my parents was a happy one, because I found my mother in a state nearly approaching health—at least entirely out of danger—when I had expected to find her at the door of death; or already past its portals. I remained at home a few weeks, though till she was strong and blooming as ever.

Chapter Ninth.

"HOW is Mr. Warlock?" I asked of my father one day.

"His wound is entirely healed," was the reply, "and he is able to ride all over the country; but I am convinced that he has some horrid secret preying upon his mind. Never have I seen a more haggard countenance than his. Indeed I believe he is partially deranged, and that he will never entirely regain his health."

"You are sure that his wound has nothing to do with it, father?"

"Entirely sure—except in so far as its bringing him so near to death awakened his remorse for his past misdeeds."

"Do you think Jake and Joe have any idea of the existence of the will in your possession?"

"I suspect that they have."

"Then are you not still in danger at their hands?"

"Hardly. Suppose they should kill me; that would not destroy the will. If the person to whom their father has bequeathed the property is known to them, he is in danger."

"So far as you are concerned," said I, "they know very well that the whole community are apprized of their feelings toward you, and if violence is committed on your person, they could not hope to escape suspicion and punishment."

"Very true, Jack. Well, I think they are effectually cowed, any way. They would never have attacked me when they did but for the old man, and since he has undergone such a change, they themselves are not nearly so rampant as they were formerly."

"There is one thing, though, I do not understand, father."

"What is that?"

"Mr. Warlock, it seems, executed that will after he was shot down on that unlucky day."

"Yes."

"And after he had become reconciled to you, and professed to have great confidence in your goodness and integrity."

"True."

"Why then did he not have you present as a witness, at the time the will was written?"

"I did not understand it, at first, myself, and I am not sure that I do now; but I ventured one day to


ask the old man. He replied, that at the time, he expected to leave the paper in the hands of the lawyer who wrote it, as he did not wish to trouble me with the matter, but afterward he concluded that I was the most proper person of all his acquaintances to attend to the business—that this idea came across his brain while Hartridge was writing, and he had my name inserted as executor.”

“ So Hartridge was the lawyer ?” I asked.

“ Yes ; luckily for the old man, an honest and close one.”

My mother rapidly grew stronger, and was soon enjoying her former health. Everything was going on smoothly, and I left home for the University of Virginia. I had now neglected my books for a good while, and this abstinence had whetted my appetite for the food on which I naturally loved to feed ; so I went into college thirsting after knowledge, and determined to do all that in me lay to gratify the fond wishes and expectations of my beloved and indulgent father.

Most of my time I devoted to the schools of ancient languages, modern languages, and moral philosophy. I was exceedingly fond of belles-lettres and logic, and general literature. It was for the sake of these, that I attended the three schools mentioned. I also paid considerable attention to physical science. Mathematics, I was exceedingly fond of, especially as connected with logic, but the three schools just spoken of, were those most constantly attended by me.



I took particular pains, though, to exercise my body, as well as my mind ; to educate myself physically, as well as mentally. The idea of becoming a mere pale, attenuated book-worm was peculiarly distasteful to me, especially since I had heard my father so often express his aversion to the character.

"My son," he said to me on parting, "if you do not wish to go to college, say so. If you wish to go, in order that you may enter on a course of idleness, and neglect of study, let me know. It is best to do this elsewhere than within the walls of a university."

"I have been candid with you, father," was my reply. "You gratified my whim for a western tour. You have ever been indulgent to me, and I shall now endeavor to please you by pursuing my studies with industry and avidity."

"I also thought, Jack, that in this you would gratify your own tastes and inclinations."

"Your opinion is correct," said I. "Books, for the next three or four years, shall be my delight."

"I would have you, though, take care of your health. Exercise your body. It is the worst folly imaginable—it is sinful—for a human being to destroy his physical health, the gift of his Creator, for the sake of a little extra book-learning."

My father's advice accorded so well with my own inclinations and opinions, that I deserve little praise for adhering to it. For my physical training, I was regular in my attendance on the school of gymnastics.

At the time of my arrival, I had not a single ac-

quaintance in the university, nor was I anxious to form a great many; but I am sociable by nature, and knew I must have some companions, or pass a dreary time. Among the five hundred students assembled, I thought it would go hard if I could not find congenial spirits, with whom to spend my hours of leisure, since these were representatives from every section of the Union; from that where they "side-line the geese on Sundays," to the one in which bowie knives and Colt's repeaters are as common as tooth-picks and jack-knives.

For a few days, I tried at every opportunity, to form some idea of the character of my neighbors, at recitation and lectures, by studying their physiognomy.

One day at the gymnasium, I saw a young man, with whose appearance I was most forcibly struck. When I first perceived him, he was leaning carelessly against a pillar, sometimes watching with steady gaze the exercises going on, and sometimes looking abstractedly around the room. He was slightly above the average height, but not enough so to be called very tall, and his frame was one of the most symmetrical I ever beheld. His feet were small; rather too much so—his waist slender—his chest, over which his coat was buttoned, broad and powerful; his hands delicate and white as those of a woman.

No one, to look at those small, lily-white hands, would have supposed for a moment that they were capable of the vice-like grip which I afterward learn-

ed they possessed. This young man's hair was of a raven blackness, and, worn much longer than ordinary. His face was of an almost preternatural pallor, but was exceedingly handsome. Each feature—the nose, mouth, chin—all were as though chiselled by the hands of a skilful sculptor. So white (I may almost say beautiful) was his countenance, that by some it would have been pronounced effeminate ; but around the mouth and in the coal-black eye, was an expression of sternness which convinced the careful observer, that an indomitable will was there.

If was difficult for me to decide whether fastidiousness, cold self-possession, melancholy, or sternness, was the predominant characteristic of the remarkably looking person before me. In spite of the delicacy of his features, it was easy to perceive that he was older than most of the students in the room, and long, drooping *mustaches* aided to form this conclusion. There was nothing of the youth in his appearance or manner. The self-poised, confident, and easy manners of the matured man was his, to an extent I have seldom, if ever, seen surpassed.

For a long time he stood, watching what was going on, or lost in abstraction, apparently perfectly unconscious that he was attracting observation from me, and I had an opportunity of studying his physiognomy well. At length he roused himself to take a part in the exercises, and when he divested himself of his coat and waiscoat, I was struck with still greater admiration of his symmetrical figure ; and when at one

time he bared his arm, I saw it was a perfect model of strength and beauty.

It is hardly necessary to state that he went through the gymnastics with the utmost ease and grace. So little effort did they cost him—even the most difficult—that it seemed they afforded no strengthening exercise to his muscles. Every one stopped to see his performance, and general admiration was evident, but no one spoke to him. Finally he drew on his coat and left the hall.

“Who is that?” I asked of a student with whom I had formed a slight acquaintance.

“Fitzwarren,” was the answer.

“What Fitzwarren?”

“Warren Fitzwarren.”

“And who is he?”

“Haven’t I told you?”

“Excuse me, Hunter,” I continued, “but that young man has excited my curiosity, and I wish to know him, and something of his history.”

“Well, nobody here knows much of that. I don’t think he has an intimate friend in the University.”

“You at least know where he comes from?”

“I think he came here from T—— county.”

“He is a Virginian, then?”

“I don’t know, but I suppose he is. I have been here already two years, but I understand Fitzwarren is a student of four years’ standing, and I have heard it said that he intends to reside here several years longer. I’ve told you, though, that he has no inti-

mate. He rooms alone, and is not dissipated. He stands high with the professors, and must be a hard student. The only relaxation or amusement he allows himself in company with others, consists in gymnastics. In his rooms, though, he has masters in boxing, fencing, painting, and music."

"I should think, then," said I, "he has his hands full."

"Oh, he seems to learn everything by intuition. You saw evidence of his activity. He is said also to possess incredible strength, and to be the best pistol-shot now extant."

"How old is he?"

"I don't *know* that, either, but I think about twenty-three."

"You say you know nothing of his history previous to his entering the University?"

"Nothing."

"I would like to have an introduction to him."

"Then I will give you one, at the first opportunity. And, by the way, his rooms are not far from yours, but if you succeed in getting much acquainted with him, you will have accomplished more than any one else has yet done."

"But what is his idea for remaining here?"

"I suppose he considers this a pleasant residence. He attends only two schools now. Medicine seems to be occupying most of his attention at this time."

"I should suppose, then, that he is studying with a view to practice."

"I think not," said Hunter. "From what I can gather, he is too wealthy to need anything of that sort. The fact is, he always appears to me listless and indifferent, and—I tell you in confidence—remorseful. I am not sure about it though, and I have no evidence except his manner."

"You think, then," I again asked, "that either a thirst after knowledge, or a desire to kill time, or both, constitute his motive for remaining here?"

"You have hit it exactly."

I saw that Hunter was a free-and-easy sort of fellow, with whom a stranger might venture to be a little familiar, so I asked:

"And how the mischief did you find out all this, Hunter, if Fitzwarren tells nothing, and nobody knows anything about him?"

"Darn it!" was the mettlesome reply, "I did not say I knew *nothing* about him, but that I knew only *a little*."

"I meant no offence," I replied, laughing.

"Oh, I am not offended; but, as the clown says, 'you're most *too* familiar on a short acquaintance.'"

"Well," was my soothing answer, "I hope this familiarity will pave the way to enduring friendship. But really and seriously, I am anxious to know how you picked up this information. It is not mere idle curiosity which prompted the question, for although I never saw Fitzwarren till to-day, I think I have heard of him before."

"I got my information, then," said Hunter, "in

the same way you are now getting yours—by dint of bare-faced questioning.”

“The truth is,” he continued, “when I first saw Fitzwarren, two years ago, I was about as much struck with his appearance as you were to-day, although he was then younger, and his phiz was hardly so remarkable as it is now. I can hardly tell you how I picked up the information I have given you, though I am well satisfied of its correctness. I am less sure about the wealth than the rest, but he certainly is possessed of a competency.”

“He wears an appearance of great fastidiousness,” I again said, “and perhaps he will not wish an introduction.”

“Pshaw! I don’t intend to ask him. The first time I see you in his company, I shall give you a ‘*knocking down*’ to him.”

“Well, Hunter, under ordinary circumstances, I would not consent to this arrangement, but I am too anxious to form this acquaintance to stand on ceremony.”

“Ceremony be hanged!” was the reply. “And I tell you, Hopeton, I believe you can worm yourself into Fitzwarren’s good graces, because you’ve got some of that devilish *rapt* manner of his. You can look powerful cat-like when you wish.”

“I acknowledge your compliment,” was my reply.

“But recollect I can see through you. You like a burst occasionally, and we’ll have some good times together. I’ll introduce you to some good fellows.”

Nor do I pretend to say that I lived the life of an anchorite, while in college. Boys will be boys, and I was nothing else. But this I will say, the *most* of my time was devoted to study, and I *generally* led a quiet life.

It was not long before I received the promised introduction to Fitzwarren. I found him very polite, but, as I expected, exceedingly reserved and distant. This was nothing, however. I was determined to know him, and I felt all the more confidence in the result, as I was conscious we possessed some tastes in common. I sought every opportunity to converse with him, and succeeded in drawing him out rather more than most of his acquaintances could do.

One day I was in a bookstore, when Fitzwarren came in and asked for a piece of music. It was just such as I should have said he would fancy, being composed in a wild, weird, almost unearthly, style. However, the music was not to be had, and he turned to go, with a disappointed look, muttering something about "pretending to sell music, and keeping nothing a man wants." It happened that I had the piece, and I called to him as he was leaving, telling him of it.

"You are a musician, then, Mr. Hopeton?" was the surprised and rather pleased reply.

"I play a good deal for my own amusement," said I.

"I was not aware of it; least of all did I suppose you would fancy *Il Disperato*."

"Go with me to my room, and I will loan it to you."

Arrived at my lodgings, I produced the piece.

"Do you not play it?" asked Fitzwarren.

"After a manner."

"Then please let me hear you."

"I have heard, Mr. Fitzwarren, that you are a most accomplished musician, and if I were disposed to be bashful, that would be a sufficient excuse for me to refuse compliance with your request; but fortunately, or unfortunately, if you like, I have plenty of brass, so here is *my* rendering."

At the first notes, my guest threw himself on a couch, and seemed to resign body and soul to the mystic influence of the strange and thrilling melody. The music was new, though I had been in possession of it long enough to be perfectly familiar with it. I had recognized it at first as a piece of singular style and wondrous power, but that evening I was more fully imbued with its spirit than ever before, and it seemed to speak a language before unheard.

The sun had gone down behind a cloud, and the room was growing rapidly dark—so much so that objects were becoming indistinct. Fitzwarren lay on the couch, his pallid features seen dimly, by the faint light straggling in at a western window, his cold mouth shaded by his raven *mustaches*, and his brilliant eye glistening and abstracted, from the influence of the wild conceptions of the composer. It was gazing on him, as he appeared the very embodiment of the spirit shadowed forth in the piece I was playing, which seemed to inspire me as I had never been before.

Wildly and more wildly I played, and more and more strange grew the expression on the face of Fitzwarren. When the last notes had died away, he still lay for some moments, as one entranced. Gradually, however, his calm, self-possessed appearance came back.

"This is the first time," said he, "I have heard that piece, though I have frequently heard it spoken of, and have been told of its strange and singular character. As you played it, it fully comes up to my expectation."

"But, let me hear you," said I.

"Willingly. What kind of music do you like?"

"Never mind what I like. Play some of your favorites."

"I like variety; but, however——"

He took the instrument, and with the first long-drawn notes, I could perceive that he was a perfect master of it. First a slow, plaintive melody stole over the strings; then it swelled into a loud, triumphant march; again it subsided into a low, simple air, and anon it burst into a strain of the wild, weird style which I could perceive he most delighted in; or a dance of the most reckless, rollicking gayety revelled over the strings. In short, Fitzwarren played a medley, composed of the most varied and contending elements—full of gems, though, and displaying perfect skill and knowledge of music.

Finally, he rose to go, and, as he received the piece of music from my hands,

"Come and see me to-morrow evening," said he, "if it will not interfere with your plans of study or pleasure. You and I have some tastes in common; as a fondness for music, for instance; and I see on your shelves, some of my favorite authors—not very generally read by those of your age."

"I will be unengaged," replied I, "at this time to-morrow evening, and I will certainly call at your rooms. As you say, I believe we have some congenial tastes, and can enjoy each other's company."

The reader can readily imagine that I very punctually fulfilled my engagement with Fitzwarren. The day after that, we took a long walk together. He, like myself, made it a rule to take a great deal of physical exercise. When the weather was fine, we took long strolls together; at other times we practised gymnastics, or boxed and fenced. In all of these things he was far my superior, although I was unusually stout and active, for one of my age. Still, he was a matured man, and had the advantage of long usage, while I had not yet attained my full amount of strength, and had not paid the same attention to these accomplishments that he had.

As to that, however, there was not a student in the University who could cope with him in manly exercises of any kind. I strove hard, and, in the course of time, managed to attain at least sufficient skill to interest him in fencing, and some portion of every day we spent together.

But still, he remained a mystery. He would talk

at times, freely, almost extravagantly, on any subject, except the one on which I felt most curiosity—his past history. It seemed as if he had made a vow to say nothing concerning his previous life. I thought, too, I could detect evidences of remorse, but so slight, I was not sure of the correctness of my opinion. Perhaps I might not have formed such an idea, had not Hunter first suggested it. Indeed, when Warren Fitzwarren chose to be impenetrable—which he almost always did—few could read what was passing in his mind.

Time passed, with me, swiftly and quietly. I was interested in my studies, and pleased with the acquaintances I formed among the students, while my mysterious friend constantly excited my curiosity. The end of the term—that long term, for there is only one a year at the University of Virginia—approached. A letter I received from my mother, about this time, will give the reader some idea of what was going on at home. I had told my parents of my prairie acquaintance, Tom Harper, and his promised visit.

“Not long since,” wrote my mother, “your friend, Mr. Harper, came to see us. He is a noble fellow, and I am pleased because you know him. Never have I seen a gayer, more light-hearted man; and I am glad he has an idea of settling in Georgia again. He has a small estate in an adjoining county, which he has not seen in a great many years. There he intends to reside for awhile, at least. It is very

strange, though, that he does not seem to consider any place as home. "

" Your father is as much pleased with him as I am. Mr. Harper spent several days at Hopeton, and then set out for his 'lodge,' as he calls it, promising, if he could so arrange it, to spend some time with us, during your vacation.

" We have engaged quite a pleasant party of ladies and gentlemen to visit us at that time. I will mention their names : Col. Banks and his daughter, from Louisiana. You have heard of them, though you never saw them. Miss Laura is a charming girl—at least she is a dashing belle, and will inherit a sugar estate, and all the appurtenances. Let me warn you, though, that she has the reputation of being a considerable flirt ; so guard well your heart.

" Mrs. Holmes you know, and Miss Morton. They will be accompanied by Miss Morton's brother, Mr. Edgar Morton, with whom you are also well acquainted. Of course your ' Uncle Charley ' will be on hand, though he pretends he can hardly spare time for it.

" But, Jack, you have heard me speak of Kate Morgan—the modest, the wild, the mischievous, the dignified, the quiet, the spirited, the merry, the pensive, the fascinating Kate Morgan. I saw her in the woods around Tallulah, last summer, with sketch-book in hand, and was immediately captivated by her beautiful face. I was in her company for several weeks afterward, and obtained a partial promise from

her to visit me. A letter came the day before yesterday, informing me that she would be here very soon, if it was convenient to me. I immediately replied, and requested her to come at the time appointed by the others.

"Perhaps you may wish to bring a friend with you from college. If so, I will try to make his visit agreeable.

"That unhappy old man, Mr. Warlock, is failing in health. Mr. Hopeton says Dr. Stubbs does not think he can live many months. It must be, as your father says, owing to a troubled conscience; for you know he was remarkably robust, considering his age, and the physician is sure that his wound has nothing to do with his declining vigor."

The letter was a long one, but the reader has all which can interest him. What my mother said about bringing a friend with me, decided my mind as to a point I had for some time had under consideration. I immediately resolved to invite Fitzwarren to spend part of his vacation with me. I had discovered this much—that he considered the University his home, and when he made short excursions from it, during vacations, it was to him as going *from* home.

Although I had failed to learn anything concerning his previous history, I had satisfied myself that he was, then, in spite of a great deal of unaccountable, mysterious eccentricity, a gentleman of as good a heart as the most of mankind possess. Besides, in

spite of his proud and disdainful reserve, I felt confident that some secret sorrow, if not remorse, was preying upon his mind. This, in addition to his lonely and isolated position, excited my compassion, and I felt anxious to do something toward relieving the gloomy monotony of his existence.

Although he sometimes relaxed into affability abroad, and had numerous acquaintances among the students, the latter assured me that no one ever visited his room but myself. Not a day passed that he and I did not exchange visits ; and one evening I asked him to go home with me, at the close of the term.

" You seem to care little for ladies' society," said I, " but if you will go with me, I will show you some of Georgia's fair daughters, before whose charms all your reserve will melt away."

" And why," asked he, " do you think I am insensible to the attractions of the fair sex ?"

" I never hear you speak of them, though I do not lay *much* stress on that ; but then I have several times urged you to go with me to call on ladies, and you invariably refused."

" That is true ; but never were you more mistaken than in the conclusion you draw from this circumstance."

" I cannot see how this is so."

" Then," said Fitzwarren, " it is precisely because I am *too* susceptible that I take care not to expose myself to love's influence. With me, ' loving is a

painful thrill,' to an extent of which you little dream ; and therefore I avoid it."

"And why painful?" I asked.

"Because attended with the consciousness that I cannot hope to inspire love in return, and even if I could, circumstances of a peculiar nature forbid me to indulge the tender passion."

"You cannot hope to inspire love!" said I, surprised.

"It seems strange to you, Hopeton. I look in the mirror, and see that my appearance is not very ungainly, though that is nothing, as Wilkes proved—but the consciousness is still within me. It may be morbid sensitiveness, but if so, it is none the less a part of my nature—of myself."

As to the last reason given by my companion, it was the nearest approach to an allusion concerning his history I had ever known to fall from his lips, and I hoped he would go on to speak of it more fully, but he disappointed me.

"I would like well enough to go with you," he again said, "but you spoke of ladies, and I suppose, from that, you are to have a party of gay friends at Hopeton. Now, my gloomy and forbidding countenance would be like death's head among them."

"No," was my reply, "our guests will have sense enough to allow you to look as you please."

"To be sure," said Fitzwarren, "they would see but little of my pliz, for if I go, it must be on one condition : that I am left free to stay in my room, or

wander in the woods, or in short, that I spend my time in my own way. But that will not do," he continued. "He who goes into society renders himself amenable to its laws, and I have no right to ask for a suspension of those laws in my favor."

"But going to our house, Fitzwarren, is not going into society. At Hopeton, we understand true hospitality to consist in allowing each of our guests to amuse himself or herself in the way which seemeth best."

"It would be foolish in me to urge further objections, so you may expect to see me about the second week of the vacation."

"Can you not go with me?"

"No," was the reply, and although, on watching his face narrowly, I could have sworn that not a muscle moved, nor did his color change, it seemed as though I could recognize the presence of some cruel and harassing memory or spirit, with whom he struggled agonizingly, but silently and uncomplainingly, as if despising human aid or human sympathy.

"No," he continued, "I shall be engaged for the first ten days. It will be at least fourteen before I can go to Georgia."

Chapter Tenth.

THE week after I got home, the guests began to arrive. Col. Banks and daughter were the first to come. The colonel was a fine-looking, ruddy old gentleman, whose white hair was the only sign of approaching age. He was of the old school; well educated, refined, and very polite—especially to *the sex*. Miss Kate Morgan had joined the Holmes party, and they all came in a lump. Uncle Charley had not yet honored Hopeton with his presence.

"He is anxious," said my father, "like a fine belle, by delaying, to make his advent with as much *eclat* as possible."

Late one evening, as several of the guests were assembled in the front colonnade, they saw a carriage of considerable pretension rolling toward the house.

"Here comes the immaculate Charley Hampton at last," said Mr. Hopeton.

"Where?" asked Mrs. Holmes.

"In that carriage."

"How do you manage to recognize him?"

"By his equipage, to be sure."

"Well, I should imagine from what I have heard of him, that he is just the man to travel in such a gaudy affair as that."

"Charley will travel in good style."

"You won't pretend to say that that concern is in good taste?"

"I shall certainly inform my friend of your sarcastic remarks, concerning his carriage."

"I hope you will, Mr. Hopeton."

"Well, he will most assuredly seek revenge."

"How?"

"Can you not guess?"

"No."

"You know Charley's reputation?"

"In what way, sir?"

"As King of Hearts."

"I know he tries to act that character."

"His revenge, then, will be sought after the usual manner of your flirts."

"Pray, enlighten us, Mr. Hopeton."

"He will set himself out to win your heart, that he may break it."

"I have heard much of the redoubtable Mr. Hampton," said Mrs. Holmes, "and met him once, but was too busy to pay much attention to him. Now, though, I shall have a good opportunity, and intend to bring him to my feet."

"Provided he does not anticipate you, Mrs. Holmes."

"When I saw him," continued the lady, "I had so many flirtations on hand, and it was so late in the season, I concluded not to undertake him."

"And so now?——" said Miss Laura Banks, who came out just then.

"So now," answered Mrs. Holmes, "I have plenty of leisure, and am determined to victimize him."

"But perhaps," said Miss Banks, "he is making the same calculations concerning you."

"Possibly."

"You know the vanity of these men is astonishing."

"Yes."

"But who is it that you are going to treat so cruelly?"

"One Mr. Charley Hampton."

"Oh! Mrs. Holmes. Then I shall be your rival."

"Very good. Both of us together surely can prove too much for him."

"I shall certainly contend for the honor of breaking his heart," said Miss Banks.

"You know Charley, then?" inquired my father.

"I have never met him, but have heard of him often."

"Well, it is singular," said Mr. Hopeton, laughing.

"What is singular?"

"Excellent! We'll have rare sport!"

"But what is so singular, Mr. Hopeton?" asked Mrs. Holmes.

"Oh, only a slight coincidence between the language you and Miss Banks have used, and that of a letter I received from Charley not long ago."

"Indeed? Well, suppose you let us hear what the letter says."

"I intend to do so, and then I shall inform Charley of your charitable intention concerning him."

"Do; and then we will be forewarned and forearmed all round."

“Certainly ; it will be a fair trial of skill.”

“But the letter.”

“Here it is, then. Charley is a voluminous writer—to me ; but I will read you only a short extract.”

Mr. Hopeton read as follows :

“ ‘ And you say, Henry, the renowned Mrs. Holmes will be at Hopeton. I am glad of it. I have long desired to cultivate her acquaintance, but have never had an opportunity of doing so. True, I saw the lady once at Catoosa, and was introduced to her, but I had so many flirtations on hand, that I was unable to bestow more than a passing thought on any new acquaintance. Now, however, thank God ! I am clear of all last season’s engagements, perfectly at leisure, and ready for a flirtation with Mrs. Holmes. I am not a vain man, you know, Hal, but I may say you are well enough acquainted with Charley Hampton to guess what will be the result when he sets out to win the heart of a lady, though that lady should be the famous Mrs. Holmes herself.’ ”

A burst of laughter greeted the reading of this precious extract, and none enjoyed it more than Miss Banks. Mrs. Holmes was astounded.

“His impudence is past belief,” said she at length ; “but the greater his pride, the greater will be his fall.”

“Very philosophical,” said my father.

“But,” he continued, “Miss Banks, will you now hear what Charley has to say of you ?”

"Of me!" exclaimed Miss Laura in the utmost confusion.

"Certainly."

"Why, what can he know of me?"

"A great deal."

"But how?"

"Did you not say, a moment ago, that you had heard of him?"

"Yes."

"Well, is it surprising ~~that~~ he should have heard of you?"

"I suppose not."

"You flirts, male and female, are sure to know all about each other, whether personally acquainted or not."

"But I think it is rather impertinent for him to indulge in remarks concerning a lady he never even saw."

"Do you? But you have been talking of him."

"Ladies are privileged."

"And so are kings of hearts."

"I said nothing of which harm can be made."

"Neither has he; or I would not read it to you."

"Well, let us hear it, at any rate."

"Here it is, then:

"Miss Banks, of Louisiana, I hear, will also honor Hopeton with her presence. This, too, is very lucky, for she is a lady I have long wished to see; and as it is impossible that the other affair can occupy all my time, the conquest of her heart may prevent the

balance from hanging heavily on my hands. You may look for me about the ——,' &c."

Amid the laughter created by this second reading, the carriage was driven up at the gate, and a fine-looking mulatto opened the door for his master, who occupied the back seat. The latter rose slowly and lounged lazily and dignifiedly down the steps, with an unlit cigar between his teeth; having been enjoying a dry smoke for the last half hour of his ride. He stopped a few moments to give some directions to his servant; and I will tell how he appeared to the ladies as he stood, with his neatly gloved hand raised to enforce attention.

He was an exceedingly fashionable-looking gentleman, with hair dark, but not black, a pair of eyes not easily matched for expression and intelligence, and features rather *distingue* than handsome. On his face there rested an air of the most supreme and imperturbable self-satisfaction, which, however, differed from the vulgar conceit of ordinary dandies, as the bright shining gold from the base counterfeit.

His dress was plain, but fitted in such a way as to show that he had an artist to work for him; and though unassuming, it was made of rich material. His figure and bearing were magnificent—grand; and as he stood, in a careless, but graceful attitude, addressing his servant, Mrs. Holmes and Miss Banks, look as closely as they might, could find no defect in his personal appearance, and they were forced to acknowledge to themselves that he was a foeman worthy of their steel.

As he finished his directions, he turned very leisurely toward the steps, and was met at the bottom by his friend. For awhile he threw aside his fashionable manner, and his voice trembled a little as he grasped my father's hand. He soon recovered, however, and resumed his mask, but not before all present had noted and wondered at this remarkable exhibition of feeling.

"*Mon cher Henri*," said Uncle Charley, as he ascended the steps, "I am exceedingly glad to find you looking so well, and still more, to see you dressed like a gentleman. I perceive you have not forgotten the lessons I taught you."

"You taught me, indeed! Why, Charley, I am a better dressed man to-day than you, although you are young and unmarried, while I am old and a *pater familias*."

Now, Uncle Charley and my father were of the same age, and this assertion was intended as a sly hit at the former for the amusement of the ladies.

"All vanity, Henry," replied Uncle Charley, in nowise disconcerted. "All vanity. I see you have not yet rid yourself of that besetting sin of your youth."

"And as it is a sin of *youth*, of course Charley Hampton lies under no suspicion of being guilty of it."

"Ah! you will persist in attempting to be witty, when I have so often assured you it is impossible for you to be so. But we'll talk all this over to-night,

when these bright eyes around us are closed in sleep. Now, I must pay my respects to them : present me."

" Well, you know Mrs. Holmes already ?"

" I believe I may claim that honor," said Uncle Charley, bowing profoundly.

" Certainly we are acquainted, Mr. Hopeton," replied the lady, with a stately inclination of her head.

" I know Mrs. Holmés ; for what Georgian does not know the boast and pride of his State ? But I was not sure she would recognize so humble and obscure an individual as myself, since our former acquaintance was so short."

" Come, Mr. Hampton, this affectation of such excessive modesty will make me suspect you of the sin of vanity, concerning which you have been lecturing Mr. Hopeton."

" Upon my honor," began Uncle Charley, laying his hand upon his heart ; when he was interrupted with,

" Never mind now, Charley, that fine speech will keep till another time. I wish to present you to another lady. Miss Banks, allow me to introduce to you my bosom friend, Mr. Hampton."

" I am honored in forming your acquaintance, Miss Banks," said Mr. Hampton, with another of his inimitable bows.

" And I," said Miss Laura, " am happy to know one who calls himself a friend of Mr. Hopeton."

Uncle Charley passed on to seek his room, and the

knot of the colonnade broke up. How well I recollect that night—the night of our friend's arrival; because I took a stroll with the beautiful Kate Morgan, and in the flood of radiance cast down through the foliage of our noble oaks, gazing on her lovely countenance, I almost imagined myself to be in love. It is not of this I wish to speak now, however; but on that brilliant evening, all of our guests assembled in the colonnade, where some remained, and whence some wandered through the magnificent grove around the house.

Mrs. Holmes, escorted by Uncle Charley, was among the latter. They made desperate attempts to convince each other that they were innocent, unsophisticated individuals, unacquainted with the wiles of flirts, &c. Finally they grew sentimental, then communicative and intimate—laying bare the inmost recesses of their young and tender hearts. They parted very much pleased, and with the best understanding in the world.

The next morning at breakfast, the gentleman addressed the lady in a rather familiar, confident manner. *Not* to his surprise, her manner was cold—almost rude. He smiled very quietly and benevolently, for the rest of the day giving her a wide berth.

It was really amusing and interesting to watch the course of this flirtation between Mrs. Holmes and Uncle Charley, especially since I was doubtful as to what would be the issue of the contest. Sometimes,

as I gazed on the proud and lofty Holmes, and listened to the rich tones of her voice, I thought my father's friend was in danger of losing his heart in good earnest.

Again, when I looked at the fine, manly figure, and recollected the true eloquence of Uncle Charley, I concluded that the lady was at least in equal danger. Still, knowing that each was, as the lady had expressed it, forewarned and forearmed, and conscious of being watched by the rest of us, I was convinced they would be very cautious how they gave way to anything like genuine feeling.

I was well aware that Charley Hampton was not what he seemed to the world. I knew that his heart was in the right place. With Mrs. Holmes I was less acquainted, and was uncertain whether she was or not what the world reported her—a mere heartless coquette. Perhaps the reader will discover, in time.

Of course Uncle Charley did not wait on Mrs. Holmes to dinner that day. She was escorted by Edgar Morton, while the knowing Mr. Hampton accompanied the quiet, but charming Miss Morton. It happened, though, that the two couples sat opposite each other, so that a conversation by one party had to be carried on in an exceedingly low tone, to avoid being heard by the other.

Whether this situation of affairs was the result of accident or design on the part of the cunning Charley, I cannot say ; but this I know, Mrs. Holmes and

her cavalier had taken their seats before the other two got to the table, and there were a number of other seats vacant ; still, they sat in the position described.

It would have seemed, from Uncle Charley's manner, that he was unconscious of the fact of Mrs. Holmes being so near him ; for he never raised his eyes to her face during dinner, but appeared entirely devoted to the fair girl at his side.

Ed Morton was a clever, good-looking, gentlemanly fellow, not very intelligent or romantic, but it was strange how suddenly Mrs. Holmes had become interested in his conversation—for she seemed equally absorbed as Uncle Charley—she who, generally, was ready to die with *ennui*, on being forced into a *tête-à-tête* with any one the least prosy or dull.

The dinner passed off, and the same game was kept up in the drawing-room, until Mrs. Holmes began to tire of it. Indeed, it was not very difficult to forget Mrs. Holmes, or any one else, seated by Miss Morton's side, listening to her soft and liquid accents, and Uncle Charley's oblivion was not altogether assumed. Mrs. Holmes was perfectly aware of the attractions possessed by her rival of the evening, and this knowledge by no means contributed to soothe her.

When she had snubbed her beau of the night before, she thought a few words in her winning way, and a tender glance of her brilliant eye, would be sufficient at any time, to bring him back to her side.

Accordingly she passed close to where he sat, and made some gay, bantering remark. It was in the form of an inquiry, and she supposed he would answer in his usual style of extravagant compliment. On the contrary, after finishing a sentence he had commenced, he rose, formally answered her, standing, in his gravest, most measured tones; then resumed his seat and his conversation with Miss Morton.

Mrs. Holmes' first impulse was to turn and leave him to himself, but she recollected this would be a triumph for him. "If," thought she, "I can bring him in, now that he is disposed to be a little rebellious, my power will be established;" so she sat down on a sofa close by.

"My dear Miss Morton," she said, "it is unfair that you should appropriate to yourself, entirely, the only lion of the company."

"I am sure I make no *effort* to appropriate any one."

"Nevertheless, you are exercising a monopoly which in this republican country is not admissible."

"But I insist that you acquit me of any *intention* to offend."

"Why you must not look so killingly beautiful."

"Go to Nature, then, with your complaint."

"Seriously, though, we are unwilling you should enjoy all of Mr. Hampton's conversation, however willing we may be to share it with you."

"Will you not address yourself to him?"

"Where's the use? *You* are the siren by whose charms he is induced to forget the rest of us."

"As he is a gallant gentleman, Mrs. Holmes, he will certainly listen to any suggestion coming from a lady."

"Not while within the sphere of your influence will he listen to aught save your dulcet tones."

"I am sorry I interfere with your enjoyment, Mrs. Holmes."

"It is not myself alone, Miss Morton; but in the name of the company I protest against monopolies."

Uncle Charley had been playing with his watch-chain during this conversation. At last he rose, actually yawning.

"And I, also," said he, "beg leave to enter a protest. It is against being called by the name of a beast, and against being interrupted in a conversation so interesting as that in which I was engaged."

And he sauntered off to the other side of the room. If Mrs. Holmes was a little astonished at the freezingly polite manner in which Mr. Hampton had replied to her first inquiry, the reader can well imagine the nature of her surprise at the rudeness of his last words. It was only paying her back in her own coin, however; but for some days, after this little incident, the two notorieties avoided each other.

Chapter Eleventh.

VARIOUS were the means of amusement resorted to by the guests at Hopeton. Never, perhaps, were hosts better acquainted with the various methods of killing time than my parents. All of the ladies and gentlemen assembled at our house were fond of riding on horseback, and scarcely an evening passed that some of them were not scouring the surrounding country on the noble steeds which were the pride of my father's stables.

One evening Uncle Charley stole off from the company to enjoy a solitary ride. Generally he accompanied the ladies ; but some whim seized him on that particular day, and he went off alone, at a rather earlier hour than usual. Later, nearly all of us mounted horse for a gallop ; Mrs. Holmes, as it happened, being again attended by Ed. Morton. She was a most accomplished horsewoman, and did not hesitate to essay the most fiery of our "bits of blood."

I was frequently rendered uneasy by her daring freaks, and endeavored to prevent her from riding very wild horses. On this particular evening, though, I was thinking of other matters, and Dick, the groom, brought out a young horse, recently purchased, of which I knew nothing, for Mrs. Holmes' use.

Pretty soon we were strung out at considerable intervals ; the foremost couple—Mrs. Holmes and Mor-

ton, being a long way ahead of us all. We filed along through a beautiful wooded road, and finally came to a large un-enclosed plain, on one side of which was a slight margin of trees, standing on the very brink of a precipitous bank at the foot of which ran a creek—creek, bank and all, being hidden from view by said trees.

Suddenly Mrs. Holmes' horse became frightened, and growing perfectly ungovernable, dashed off at a furious rate directly toward the precipice. Had he kept straight on, in the open field, I should have felt little apprehension, knowing the lady's equestrian skill, and feeling assured she would be able, finally, to take him up. As it was, I sat on my horse paralyzed with fear as I saw the mad brute rushing blindly to certain destruction.

I saw that he would reach the bank long before I could overtake him, and for that reason I made no effort. Ed. Morton did what he could to check the horse, galloping along and snatching at the bridle, but all his efforts seemed to have only the effect of further frightening the already desperate animal. The ladies of the party saw the danger, and screamed with apprehension.

I had given up all hope, expecting to see Mrs. Holmes die a horrible death. She was not aware of the existence of the creek and bank, or she would have thrown herself from her horse, risking broken bones, rather than face certain destruction. Just at this time, while her horse was bounding on like light-

ning, I saw a horseman galloping at full speed, toward the line in which Mrs. Holmes was riding. It was Uncle Charley, and as I recognized him, I drew a deep sigh of relief, for I knew that he would do everything that mortal was capable of, to stop the horse.

Mrs. Holmes also recognized him, and had an instinctive idea that he would risk his life in an attempt to save her. She afterward declared that she almost resolved to die, rather than owe her safety to him. She jerked her steed with all her might, hoping to check him sufficiently to enable her to leap to the ground; but it was too late, for Uncle Charley crossed the path a little ahead, pulled his horse short up, swung himself from the saddle and seized the bridle of the frightened animal ridden by the lady.

The horse was so near the ravine, I thought he would plunge in, carrying Mrs. Holmes and Uncle Charley both. As it was, the latter was lifted clear from the ground and dragged forward several paces; but he finally succeeded in arresting the struggling beast, on the very verge of the precipice—the very brink of destruction—and threw him back on his haunches.

“Gallantly done!” shouted Morton, while Uncle Charley held the still trembling and frightened horse.

“I will leave you now, Mrs. Holmes,” again said Edgar, “since you are in such gallant hands.”

“Oh, I beg you will not, Mr. Morton,” exclaimed the lady, actually bursting into tears.

"But before you go," said Uncle Charley, "you will surely assist Mrs. Holmes to dismount from this wild horse."

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Holmes, pulling at the reins; "I entreat you to allow me to rejoin the company."

"I assure you, Mrs. Holmes," said Uncle Charley, "on the honor of a gentleman, this animal is unsafe. Let me put your saddle on my horse, which is as gentle as a dog."

"Mine is over his fright, now."

"You are mistaken. See how he trembles. When I have placed you on my gentle horse, I will leave you, since my very presence seems hateful."

"Now *you* are mistaken," said Mrs. Holmes, her voice choking with emotion.

"I am certainly *de trop*," said Ed Morton. "Let me help you down, Mrs. Holmes, and then I *must* go. None but the brave deserve the fair, and Mr. Hampton has most bravely rescued you from the very jaws of death. See that precipice, down which your horse was about to plunge."

"It seems, then," said Mrs. Holmes, "you both are anxious to desert me. Was ever a lady so treated?"

"To him who is most anxious to remain," said Mr. Hampton, "and who would gladly devote his life to your service, you give no permission to stay."

"Oh! I am grateful to you both; to you, Mr. Hampton, for saving my life, and to you, Mr. Mor-

ton, for endeavoring to do so. It was not your fault that you could not get far enough before to stop my horse."

"I take no credit to myself," was the reply; though it was true, that it was not for lack of nerve, that Ed failed to do what Uncle Charley did, but for the very reason stated by Mrs. Holmes.

By this time we all rode up, and entreated Mrs. Holmes to make the exchange offered by Uncle Charley. Finally she consented.

"I am in disgrace now," said Ed Morton, as he galloped off, "and am going home."

The party mounted and rode back toward the house. Arrived there, in going in, Uncle Charley contrived to linger a little behind, with Mrs. Holmes.

"Permit me now," he said, in his low earnest tones, "to apologize to you for my apparent rudeness of the other night. I trust I have now proved to you, by risking my life in your service, that I only value it while hoping to enjoy your favor."

By this time they were too near the other guests to admit of a reply—which occurred just as the cunning Mr. Hampton intended—and Mrs. Holmes could only lift her eyes to the speaker's face, to see if she could read his thoughts. She encountered Uncle Charley's steadfast gaze, fixed full upon her. Inquiringly, searchingly, they both looked, as if they would pry into the most secret recesses of each other's hearts. They walked through the hall, and separated, each wondering what the other meant.

The reader will, no doubt, suppose that after this, Uncle Charley was frequently in close conversation with Mrs. Holmes. On the contrary, however, he seemed to avoid conversing with her ; but he sought every occasion to render her little services. If she complained of the draft from a door or window, he hastened to close it. If a chair was not convenient when she entered the room, he was before everybody else in procuring one for her. Indeed, he strove to make it appear, in a thousand ways, that her happiness and convenience were his sole care.

To her thanks he replied by resolutely persisting that he only did what common politeness required. " And what could have been his object in all this ?" asks the reader. " Was he trying, deliberately, to win a heart that he might trample upon it ? And is this the man whose ' heart is in the right place ' ?"

Dear reader, do not be uneasy about Mrs. Holmes' heart, for she is fully equal to the task of taking care of it. As to Uncle Charley's object, you will discover soon enough what it was. Time frequently hangs heavy on the heads of these fashionable people, and they get up flirtations merely *pour passer le temps*. They mean no harm in the world by it ; the thing being perfectly understood on both sides, they neither " chate nor are chated." They go into it with their eyes open, and it is merely a trial of skill, in which the heart is not the least concerned.

In this view of the case, cannot even a man whose " heart is in the right place," indulge in a little flir-

tation, without doing violence to his natural goodness? I imagine this to be one of the very cases alluded to, where, as Mrs. Holmes expressed it, they were "forewarned and forearmed all around;" for my father had told Uncle Charley of the conversation in the colonnade, and of his having read to the ladies extracts from that letter. Do not judge Uncle Charley too harshly, till you see the result of the flirtation.

"Harry," said my father's friend to him one night, when all the rest of the company had retired; "I do not feel the least sleepy, and you do not look so; suppose you go to my room and try a cigar."

"Are they good, Charley?"

"Come with me and see."

"There, sir!" continued Uncle Charley, after they had reached the room, as he opened a box and held it close under his friend's olfactories. "See if they are not superior to anything you've smoked lately."

"They *do* look like a fair article," was the reply, as my father inhaled their delicious aroma.

"Try one, Harry, and don't put on such airs."

"Charley, I shall not be surprised to find them almost equal to my E. D's."

"Just listen to the man! '*Hear till him!*'"

They both lit weeds, and my father dropped into a luxurious arm-chair, while his companion stretched himself at full length on a couch by one of the low-cut windows, and leaning out of it, gazed upon the

silent dark grove below. The moon was the faintest sort of a crescent, and cast a few silvery threads of light over the dense foliage, penetrating it only here and there. No sound was heard on the still night air, save the tremulous chime of the Katydid, and the softened murmur of distant water. A slight breeze was stirring the leaves of the oaks, and the dreamer bent over to catch it. Thousands of fire-flies glanced through the deep shade, with their sparkling, fitful light.

"Henry," at length said Uncle Charley, "how can you sit there instead of looking out upon this magnificent scene? It is beautiful—lovely, beyond the power of description. Look at the deep shadow cast by these immense old trees, with a few lines of light streaming across it. Listen at the singing and the enchanting sound of that distant waterfall."

"Yes," replied my father, as he puffed out a thin cloud of smoke, which eddied slowly, gracefully, ethereally, around his head, but not stirring from his seat; "I suppose it is all very beautiful, and have thought so all the time; but you have seen it frequently before, and how does it happen you've just concluded to remark its lovely features?"

"I've admired it always."

"Perhaps so; but how happens it you've never *expressed* your admiration? Something has certainly occurred to give a romantic tinge to your thoughts. What is it, my friend?"

"Pshaw! Can't you allow a man to speak of the

beauties which the God of nature has spread out before him, but you must accuse him of romance ?”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed Uncle Charley’s companion. “ Now, I am sure there is something the matter with you.”

Then ensued an interval of silence, during which the two friends puffed their cigars, and ruminated. My father had lighted on a train of thought which seemed to absorb him for some moments. At length he broke the silence.

“ Charley, do you not believe marriage essential to a man’s happiness ? ”

“ Y-e-e-e-s,” was the hesitating reply—“ to an *old* man’s happiness.”

“ Well, you have never tried to marry.”

“ True.”

“ How can you act *thus*, and think *so* ? ”

“ Am I an old man, then, Harry ? ”

“ Nonsense ! But to reply ; let us begin farther back. Tell me why you think marriage essential to an *old* man’s happiness ? ”

Uncle Charley was still smoking lazily, quietly ; and for some moments did not reply. His friend bore with him, for he saw there was something struggling in his bosom, and believed it would presently find utterance. At length Uncle Charley threw away his cigar, and straightened himself up.

“ Hal,” he exclaimed, “ this is a subject on which I have never conversed much, simply because I have never thought very seriously about it. Lately,

though, I have been meditating on it, somewhat. The act of marrying in an old man is very foolish, though the married state is, to him, almost the only happy one; and there is the misery. What constitutes the happiness of this phase of existence, to an old man, is the deep and holy affection which has sprung up and strengthened between himself, and her who has been his companion in life's long, weary, pilgrimage; and the children—the support of declining years—supposed to be the natural accompaniment of wedlock. To marry after one has grown old, of course renders a man liable to disappointment in this regard. What a pity a man cannot marry a family at the same time he marries a wife! Then he might postpone this business till old age."

"He can, Charley," said my father.

"How?"

"By taking certain widows with numerous children."

"Ah! but they would not be his children."

"That is true."

"A young man can be happy, Hal, unmarried. I believe he can see more pleasure as a bachelor than as a benedict. Young, active, energetic, fond of roving, perhaps, with fresh, enthusiastic feelings, age has not yet so cooled the ardor of his blood as to cause the quiet happiness of domestic life to appear of more value in his eyes, than the excitement and pleasures of the world, or the pursuit of wealth or honor.

"In old age, on the contrary, loss of energy and physical infirmity render him incapable of enjoying the pursuits which, in the days of his vigor, were so attractive, and he seeks pleasures of a different kind. Shall the old man, then, attempt to raise a family ? Alas ! it is too late !—if he has spent his youth and manhood's prime in what he is pleased to term 'single blessedness,' his age will remind one of the old, decayed and withered tree, standing in the midst of a vast plain, away from companionship and shelter, isolated, desolate ; stretching out its gaunt arms beseechingly, while the cruel storm beats pitilessly on its defenceless head.

"The last days of such a man present the most perfect picture of human wretchedness of which my mind can conceive. No children to soothe his last moments ; |

" 'No loved one now, no nestling nigh,
He is floating down by himself to die !'

"If by the mere act of marrying, a man could possess himself of what renders married life happy, then he might defer it till he becomes old ; but as it is, he must spend the best part of his young manhood in preparing those things which are to constitute his happiness in after-life."

A long pause followed this harangue. At length the speaker resumed :

"If I were sure of dying at the age of fifty, or even sixty, I would never marry ; but as I may live longer, why—"

"Why what?"

"Let me light another cigar."

The cigar seemed to soothe Uncle Charley's feelings, for he sank back quietly on the couch, and resigned himself to its benignant influence. When he spoke again, it was as follows:

"Henry, I am in love."

"I know it," was the brief reply.

"How the devil *do* you know it?"

"Because six months of your manhood have never passed without your falling in love, and it is now just about half a year since your last scrape."

"Oh, I am not jesting, now," said Uncle Charley.

"Besides," resumed my father, apparently not noticing the last remark, "you recollect what you wrote me in that letter."

"Oh, blast the letter! It has played the very mischief with me, I fear."

"But who has bound you in silken fetters this time?"

"Guess."

"Miss Morton?"

"No."

"Well you've paid attention to only one other lady. Miss Banks and Miss Kate Morgan—the last named the most *piquant* of them all, in my humble opinion—have hardly received a passing notice at your hands."

"Guess on."

"It *can't* be Holmes?"

"Harry, how can I convince you that I am serious this time?"

"Your manner has already half convinced me. Look me in the eye and tell me you are really in love; that will settle the matter."

"See here, then. It is, at last, cold, sad reality. I *am* in love."

"I fully believe you."

"Now, then, comes the most embarrassing part of the business—telling who it is that has bewitched me."

"And why should that prove embarrassing?"

"I fear you'll laugh at me."

"No, I will not."

"It is one who, I fear, is incapable of love, and even if this were not so, she could never be brought to regard me with affection. Besides, I believe if she really loved me, she would never allow herself to acknowledge it."

"And why not?"

"Because she is too proud; and she is a woman. She seeks revenge, and were she to find I love her, even if she should return the feeling in her heart, she would sacrifice anything for an opportunity of humbling me in the dust."

"It *must* be Mrs. Holmes."

"You have guessed it."

"Well, how in the name of common sense, Charley, can you love a woman whom you consider so heartless a creature?"

"How can you ask such a question, Hal? As if a man can bind or loose his passions as he listeth!"

"I always thought men loved certain qualities, or attributes, and that they bestowed their affections on the persons possessed of these."

"Perhaps that is true—sometimes."

"But it never seemed to me that heartlessness was calculated to win you."

"I don't know how that is. It may be that only my imagination is captivated."

"Then get out of it, Charley."

"Oh! I tell you I can't help it."

"You, Charley Hampton? The cool, experienced, well-balanced man of the world—you yielding to such weakness!"

"Bear with me, my friend. I am not sure that what I say of Mrs. Holmes is true, I only awfully fear it."

"Well, Charley, I expect Mrs. Holmes has the same opinion of you, that you have of her; so even should you make a declaration of love, in all probability she would think you were not serious."

"Yes."

"But if you find out she is really destitute of heart, surely you can then give up this sudden passion."

"Very easily. How, though, am I to satisfy myself on this point, till I've been jilted?"

"Well, really I can't say."

"I wish to avoid this mortification. Oh, I *don't* wish to have my feelings trampled on."

"Charley, I know it is rather mean to say to you, 'I told you so;' but you see the truth of my frequent warnings."

"Alas, Hal, I now see how truly you prophesied. I have so long sustained the character of flirt—trifler—butterfly—that it is impossible for me to persuade people that I can be anything else. Oh, that a man should fritter away his life as I have done!"

And Uncle Charley rose, grinding his teeth, and paced the floor excitedly. At length he resumed,

"I will tell you all about it—though what will be the use? I was about to tell you of the origin and progress of my love, and how it differs from ordinary affection; but it would be sheer folly. Such tales have become trite and common to your ear. I myself have contributed more than any one else to make them so."

"But what course do you intend to pursue?" asked my father.

"I don't know, Harry. Time will show. Perhaps I will 'let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, feed on my damask cheek.' If so, I must leave this. Good night, Hal. I must sleep now."

"Good night, Charley. You are fortunate if you can sleep. This makes me think you are still yourself. Sleep; yet remember, 'faint heart never won fair lady.'"

But sleep did not visit Uncle Charley's eyes in a good while after his friend's departure; and for several nights previous, he had not had his share of

"tired nature's sweet restorer." It was strange to see the matured man of the world, going through all the stages of love, like a youth of eighteen.

The next morning at breakfast, "the man of the world" had a seat by Mrs. Holmes, and commenced a conversation which, to most of the guests, seemed to be in his ordinary cool, bantering manner. The lady also, on her part, conducted it, to casual observation, in the same careless flippant style. The close observer, though, especially if he had some inkling of what was passing in the deep recesses of the hearts of each, could detect a shade of embarrassment and awkwardness in the manner of both parties, which indicated the existence of *some* feeling.

For the next few days, Uncle Charley sought Mrs. Holmes' company frequently; but it all resulted in nothing.

"The truth is, Hal," he said to my father, "I cannot muster courage to tell her I love her. If there was not so much truth in it, I could tell her so twenty times without the least embarrassment. What has come over me?"

"I can't say, Charley," was the answer. "It seems to me you entirely forget that faint heart never won fair lady."

"Yes; it is very easy for you to say that, but only place yourself in my situation."

"What?—in love? Ain't I in love now—with Mrs. Hopeton? Wasn't I in love when I courted her? At least you'd better not tell *her* I was not."

"You had no flirt to deal with. But why do I speak thus? If I thought Mrs. Holmes a mere flirt, I could not love her. Still, if I did *not* think her a flirt, I would not hesitate to avow my love."

"I see, Charley," said father, "that though you are partially demented, you are philosopher enough to analyze your feelings very skilfully."

"I wish I were philosopher enough, Hal, to reason this foolish whim out of my head."

Chapter Twelfth.

AT the appointed time Fitzwarren came, and soon after, Tom Harper rejoiced me with his advent. The sight of his handsome, manly face, and the sound of his cheering voice, brought to mind the free, wild gallops we had taken together over the wild prairies, and the merry bivouacs with the entertaining talk around the camp fires.

"So you have really come back to Georgia, Tom," said I. "You have rather surprised me, for I must acknowledge I did not much expect to see you."

"Well, you know," answered Tom, "I told you it was uncertain whether or not I would come; but an irresistible longing to see the old homestead possessed me."

"And in what kind of state did you find things at home?"

"Of course they were much changed. The graveyard, the grounds around the house, and the whole plantation, were overgrown with weeds and briers, and even shrubs which could almost be termed trees. The house was covered with moss ; but fortunately it is a solid structure, and the body of it has yielded very little to the hand of time, though some of the out-doors and windows were slightly decayed."

"And where are you staying now ?"

"Why, where else but at my own home ? I have had all the rotten timbers replaced by sound ones, and made a few rooms comfortable, so that I am living in very snug bachelor quarters. You must spend a week with me before you go back to college."

"With pleasure."

"I can give you some fine shooting. An old acquaintance of mine residing in Augusta, who has gone to Europe, laid me under obligations by sending me a well-broke pointer to keep during his absence. I used to have trained dogs before I adopted the nomadic manner of living, and if I conclude to reside in Georgia again, I will take good care to have them once more. I can easily drill some by the time D. returns."

"I am glad to hear you talk of residing here again, Tom."

"Yes. It is by no means certain that I will do so, however. I am, as yet, undetermined. Circumstances may alter my half-formed plans, any day."

"May I be allowed to inquire on what contingencies your staying or not staying will depend?"

"I will tell you some other time. But, Jack, what a charming lady is Miss Kate Morgan! By Jove! if I were as young as you, I believe I would fall in love."

"I am glad to hear you talk so at last, Tom. Miss Kate's bright eyes will dispel that lurking misanthropy in which you are prone to indulge."

"Very possibly, Jack; but if I fall in love, I must have a rival to make it interesting."

"Never fear, Mr. Tom; you will have numbers of these."

"Yourself among them?"

"Perhaps so; but I will not be a very formidable one, as I am yet a college boy. However, you recollect that singular-looking genius, Fitzwarren, to whom you were introduced this morning?"

"Yes; and I never saw a more striking countenance. He cannot pass through a crowd unnoticed."

"You are right. He excites remark and conjecture wherever he makes his appearance."

"Does he ever laugh, Jack?"

"I have never seen anything more decided than a smile flit across his features, but they say he sometimes indulges in the wildest, most extravagant kind of mirth."

"But what about him, Jack? Why did you speak of him?"

"Oh, I forgot. Why, I think, from the way he

looked at Miss Kate during dinner, to-day, he is destined to be your rival, if you become tender in that quarter."

"So be it, then. But he is a devilish strange fellow."

"Women are captivated by mystery and eccentricity, Tom."

"True, true! Oh, I don't doubt he'll be as formidable a rival as I care to encounter. But if he spoils my game with Miss Morgan, I'll e'en try a sly flirtation with Miss Laura Banks."

"Seriously though, Tom, you must be a ladies' man, once more, for the sake of our guests."

And true to his word, he almost devoted himself to the fair portion of our guests; and from what I have said of his qualifications, the reader can easily believe that he made himself agreeable. Fitzwarren also surprised me. Generally, he was cold, reserved, almost disdainful as when I first knew him. Even in the very midst of company, he wore the same air of mingled melancholy, haughtiness, and abstraction. Sometimes, though, he would shake it off, and converse with a brilliancy and gayety which absolutely astounded me.

Occasionally, he would bury himself in his room, or wander off in the solitary woods, all day; and whenever this was the case, at night, if we all gathered in the drawing-room, he was sure to delight us with flashing and erratic eloquence, or mirthful sallies. But even in these instances, there was a cold, dreamy

look in his eye ; and sometimes this would so increase as to render it unpleasant to encounter his fixed gaze. Then he would relapse into silence, and seem utterly oblivious of the presence of those around him.

He was exceedingly fond of the exercise of riding on horseback. Nor did short excursions satisfy him. One day my father and I concluded to call on Mr. Warlock, and as it was a pretty long ride, knowing how Fitzwarren would be pleased, I asked him to accompany us. It happened also that Tom Harper went with us.

Arrived at the house, we saw Mr. Warlock sitting in his porch, smoking ; and for a wonder, his sons were with him. We entered the gate and walked up the steps. As we drew close to the old man, Fitzwarren, looking into his face, started as if he had trod on a serpent. Gazing, his eye dilated, and his breath came short and thick, as he muttered,

“ What a strange likeness ! *Can* it be ?—but impossible !——”

We looked on in wonder. Soon Fitzwarren perceived our astonishment, and by a strong effort resumed his composure. Almost in a moment his face wore the same impassable, impenetrable expression which was its customary one, and when he was introduced, not a tremor in his voice betrayed a trace of his recent agitation.

Fitzwarren's name seemed to produce an equally wonderful influence on Mr. Warlock. As the former looked him steadily in the eye, he stood transfixed

and motionless ; gazing with astonishment, and for some moments unable to articulate.

The two young men betrayed equal emotion. They glared on Fitzwarren with an expression of mingled fear and hatred, reminding me very forcibly of two dogs, in doubt whether to bite or run away.

At length the old man mustered composure sufficient to salute the strangers, and ask us to be seated. His sons seemed to have lost all control over themselves ; and soon making some excuse about "business in the plantation," they left the house. Their father made a show of conversation, but his agitation was painful to behold, especially when Fitzwarren, in addressing him, would direct his calm, searching glance toward where he sat.

We did not cease to wonder at all this. We made a short visit, though, for company seemed anything but agreeable to Mr. Warlock in his present mood. After a short attempt at conversation, we mounted our horses and rode homeward. As soon as we were fairly on our way, Fitzwarren, in his quiet, *of course* manner, remarked,

"The old man we have just left bears so singular a resemblance to one whom I knew under very painful circumstances, that the sight of him discomposed me a little."

We might have told him that the old man seemed to know *his name* under "very painful circumstances," but of course politeness forbade it, since

we saw he was not disposed to be any further communicative.

That night, after supper, Tom, my father, and myself, sat smoking on a bench under one of our huge oaks.

"Of course," said I, "you two noticed Fitzwarren's agitation at meeting Mr. Warlock to-day. What can it mean?"

"Can't say, Jack," replied my father, "you heard his explanation of it."

"Rather a lame one, though, I thought."

"Yes," said Tom. "He said the old man very much resembled one he had known under painful circumstances. But his *name* produced rather startling effects, as well as Mr. Warlock's appearance."

"Perhaps," said my father, rather sarcastically, "there was a resemblance in the name."

"Can you explain it, Jack?" asked Tom.

"No," answered I, "for nearly a year, I have been with Fitzwarren every day, but he is not a very communicative man, and I know nothing of his past life."

"He has not bored you with his adventures, as I have, then?"

"He has told me nothing. I may be deceived in him, but I think that under a cold and cynical exterior, he conceals a noble and generous nature. I believe him to have a nice sense of honor—in short that he is a high-toned gentleman."

Not far from where we sat, was a thick clump of

shrubbery, which cast a deep shade, notwithstanding the brightness with which the moon shone. As I ceased to speak, a long shadow was thrown across the space between where we sat and this dark spot, while the figure of a man emerged from concealment, and stalked toward us.

The new-comer was a perfect curiosity in appearance. He was of immense height, of large frame, with broad shoulders, but thin in flesh. His long, straight, black hair fell in raven masses on his shoulders, and an equally black beard, with a few silver threads in it, flowed down his breast.

He wore a slouched felt hat, put on in a style which reminded one of Spanish costume. A hunting suit, similar to that worn by regular frontiersmen, enveloped his form. A rifle of enormous length was carried on his shoulder. So long was this gun, it seemed as if, in the hands of so tall a man as himself, it might be used for knocking the game out of trees, as well as shooting it.

When within a few feet of us, he halted. Tom looked at him with astonishment.

"If I were to see that figure on the prairies, Jack," said he, "it would seem in perfect keeping; but what the deuce is such a thing doing in this country?"

"Well, Gaunt," said my father, before I could reply to Tom's question, "why don't you come up? What do you stand there for?"

"I wanted to see ef you knowed me," said

Gaunt, approaching, as he uttered a low, strange laugh.

"*Knowned* you? Who could ever forget your scarecrow figure?"

"Your eyesight keeps pretty good, I see. 'Twas mighty good once, I know, when you and I used to cruise round the pint."

"Well, never mind the *pint*, now. Have you had supper?"

"No."

"I'll have a table set for you, then."

"I don't want no table set. Have me some cold meat and bread brought right here, quick as you please, for I am devilish hungry."

The victuals being brought, the strange visitor made a terrible onslaught upon it.

"You all jest talk on," said he. "Don't mind me till I'm done eatin', and then I'll tell you what I come for."

Accordingly we left the new-comer to his repast, and conversed on indifferent topics, till he should get through his meal. This was soon the case.

"Try a cigar, sir?" said Tom, as he saw the object of his *wonderment* cease from his attack on the edibles, and wipe his mouth with his coat-sleeve.

"No, thankee," was the reply, as Gaunt produced a short pipe from his pocket, and proceeded to fill it with tobacco, drawn from the same receptacle.

"Now, Mr. Hopeton," said he, after lighting the pipe, and commencing to smoke, "here's what I

come for. Is there a gentleman in your house named Fitzwarren?"

"Yes."

"Is that him thar?"

"No. Mr. Harper, let me introduce you to Mr. Carlos Nunez, commonly known as Bill Gaunt. He is quite a character.

"Gaunt, this is a friend of my son, and consequently of myself."

"Happy to form your acquaintance, Mr. Nunez," said Tom, shaking the hand proffered him.

"Ef you're a friend of Mr. Hopeton and his son," answered Gaunt, "I'm glad to know you, and I'm your friend. I'm ready to serve any man who is friendly to Mr. Hopeton or his."

"But what about Fitzwarren, Gaunt?" asked I, for I was burning with curiosity.

"Well, he'd better leave these parts as quick as possible."

"Why?"

"Because Jake and Joe Warlock have sworn to have his blood."

"What!" exclaimed my father. "Why do they wish to kill him?"

"First, then, as to that will you've got——"

"The mischief! Gaunt! Are you a wizard, or an imp of darkness? Do you know everything?"

"No, I don't; but I know a damned sight, as the folks who have been hounding me so long, will one day find to their cost."

"I expect so."

"But," resumed Gaunt, "as to that will——"

"But how do you know I've got any will?" again interrupted my father.

"Ef you want to hear my tale," said Gaunt, doggedly, "I must tell it my own way."

"Say on, then."

"I witnessed the will myself, because the old man begged me to do it, being mightily down in the mouth, saying he wanted to do justice to somebody he had wronged, and all that. I went after the lawyer, and fixed the whole matter, as Mr. Warlock wanted to keep his sons from knowing anything about it. I only signed as a witness, and didn't hear it read. The lawyer who wrote it may keep it a secret or not. I got the one I was told to get. My part of the business was done sly enough, and the boys were none the wiser for it. The rest would have been done right, too, if Mr. Warlock had let me bring the will to you.

"But I b'lieve he expected to do something else with it. Any how, he kept it awhile, and then give it to you with his own hands; and a pretty kettle of fish he made of it. Jake Warlock is as cunning as any *varmint*, and all the time you and his old daddy was talking, he was listening at the key-hole.

"Somehow, ever since you befriended me, and kept me out of jail, when nobody else would, I have felt like doing what I could to serve you. I know it is agin human natur to be grateful, but I don't believe

I am exactly human any way. At least I can't help liking you, for befriending me.

"When I first heard of your difficulty with the Warlocks, I knew you were in some danger, for they are cowardly devils, and will shoot a man down without giving him a chance; so I concluded to get thick with them, and find out all their plans. I knew they were going to attack you and your son that evening, and was hid in a black-jack thicket, with my bead drawn on old Warlock, when you dropped him so sweetly. I didn't show myself, because I didn't want them to know I was your friend. I knowed I could save you best by pretending to be *their* friend.

"Since the change in the old man, Jake and Joe have been thicker with me than ever, and that day you got the will, you hadn't been gone from the house more than an hour, before I knowed all about it.

"To-day, you and Mr. Harper here, and Jack and this Mr. Fitzwarren, went to see Mr. Warlock, and 'twant long before Jake and Joe had hunted me up, and told me that the very fellow the old man had left half his property to, had been to their house, and his name was Fitzwarren, and they wanted him put out of the way. They said they'd had enough of you, and besides, if you were killed, their hatred toward you was so well known, it would raise the whole country against them. And more than that, killing you wouldn't hinder the property from going to Fitzwarren.

"They said, though, that good luck had thrown the game right in the way ; and they wanted to hire me to 'do the job,' as they called it. The damned, infernal hell-hounds ! 'Twas all I could do to keep from settling *their* hash on the spot, and I kept playing with the trigger of my rifle, and putting my hand on my knife. No !" and the tall form of the hunter seemed to tower higher as he spoke. "No !—There is blood on this hand ; but it was shed, not for gold, but for *revenge* !

"I said 'twas all I could do to keep from doing *their* job on the spot ; but I choked down my feelings, and told them in a joking way : I'd see 'em damned first—that they might do their own dirty work.

"They said, then they'd do 'it themselves ; so if the gentleman is your friend, you can do as you think best."

With these words the long mortal shouldered his rifle to go.

"Hold on, Gaunt," said my father. "Is that all ?"

"Yes."

"And can't you tell any more ?"

"No. What more would you have ?"

"I want to know the time when, and the place where, they intend to execute their hellish intentions."

"But all this I don't know."

"Can you give us no clue ?"

"None. I was afraid to question them too closely, for fear they'd suspect me. I know this, though, that they intend to 'execute their hellish intentions,' as you call it, the first chance."

"Can't you manage to worm something out of them?"

"*P'raps* I may, next time."

"In the meantime, Gaunt," said I, "for my sake, you will do what you can to keep harm away from Fitzwarren, who is my friend."

"Ef he's your friend, yes. Otherwise, he might die, for me."

"You are bitter, friend," said Tom.

"Yes, and the man who passes through what I have will always be gall itself."

"Well, Gaunt," said my father, "since you promise so much, I shall be better satisfied."

"I'll watch the boys. They *may* be too smart for me, but '*taint* likely, you know, Mr. Hopeton."

"Not very."

"It seems to me, though," interrupted Tom, "the plainest way would be to get Mr. Gaunt to make his depositions before a magistrate, and have these men arrested."

"Yes," said Gaunt, "but I've got a voice in the matter, and I'll be damned if I go before any magistrate—begging your pardon, Mr. Harper."

"Ah, well; that, of course, alters the case."

"Gaunt is not fond of magistrates, Mr. Harper," explained my father; "and that course would not put a stop to the matter anyway."

"I think it would, father," said I. "Knowing the public to be aware of the threats they have made against Fitzwarren, they would have the same reason for not attacking him, that they have for not troubling you."

"True ; but this same object can be effected in a different way. Gaunt, you make an arrangement to meet Jake and Joe Warlock at some place where we will conceal ourselves, and hear them discuss their plans, and make their propositions to you. Then we will come out, tell them their designs are discovered, and that if harm comes to Fitzwarren, they will surely be suspected. This, I think, will cause them to give up their fell purpose."

"Well, sir," answered Gaunt. "Come to the Foxhole Rock, the day after to-morrow—a half dozen of you—and hide in that little place you know of, about three o'clock in the evening. I'll tell the boys to meet me there between four and five o'clock, and then you can listen to your heart's content. I tell you to come an hour before that time, so that Jake and Joe won't, by any chance, see you until you are ready."

"We'll go sooner than three, Gaunt. Two o'clock will find Mr. Harper, Charley Hampton, Jack, my overseer, and myself, safely housed. I must be sure that you won't come till we are ready for you."

"All right. Good night, gentlemen."

"But hold on!" said Mr. Hopeton. "Stay all night."

"Can't do it; much obliged to you."

"Where are you going, this time of night?"

"That's *my* business."

And the tall form of the hunter was soon out of sight, as he strode off through the dark grove.

"Now, Mr. Hopeton," said Tom, "*can* you, and *will* you tell me, who and what this queer chap is?"

"Briefly, then, for I am getting sleepy. He is originally from Florida, and is the son of a Spaniard who married an American girl. You can see the Spaniard in his appearance, and in a certain vindictiveness which he displays; but there is much good in him. It is true that when he hates, it is as a fiend; but for a man he likes, he is ready to die. I befriended him, formerly, in various ways—too tedious to mention—and he is devoted to me. He is in very bad odor with most people, or with a great many, at least, and chooses to consider himself an outlaw.

"This is why he dislikes magistrates; but although he once committed a deed which many would call murder, he is in no danger now, from the law. He ranges from here to L—— county, having several hiding places, but I can always find him, when I want his services.

"Brooding over his wrongs, and fancying he is hunted of men, he has become a little crazy—a monomaniac—though perfectly sane on all subjects but one. This must satisfy your curiosity for to-night. Good-night."

Chapter Thirteenth.

HORSES were brought to the door on the day appointed by Gaunt, and those of us designed as witnesses, mounted them and rode off, calling by the house of Jones and taking him with us. Right through the plantation we went, for a mile and a half, when we saw in the distance an immense swamp. Arrived at this, following the example of my father, we dismounted, and, putting aside the bushes, led our horses some distance into the swamp, and tied them, where they would be unseen by any one passing on the outside, even close to the spot where we entered. The ground, as far as we had gone, though soft, was by no means miry.

"Now," said my father, as we emerged from the swamp, "we must take this path which runs along just outside the thicket."

"Won't those fellows see our tracks?" inquired Tom Harper.

"No. They will come on the other side, and tie over there. They have no business on my premises."

The path led us on half a mile along a swamp which grew thicker as we proceeded, until it seemed to become absolutely impenetrable by anything except a mink or a moccason.

"We must enter here," said our guide, suddenly stopping.

"Yes," said Uncle Charley, looking at the almost

solid barrier before him. "Yes, when the way has been cleared ; but where is your corps of pioneers ?"

"We don't need any. Just follow my example."

Saying which, my father, after looking carefully around to see if any one was observing us, stopped, and opening the thick undergrowth, crept on his all-fours. We followed for about a score of paces, when suddenly our guide stood upright, and walked on in a plain, well-beaten path.

"Well, Harry," said Uncle Charley, again, "I should as soon have thought of forcing a way through a stone wall, as into this swamp."

"You see, though, Charley, it was very easily done."

"Yes ; but how did you know where to come in ? Everything looked alike to me outside."

"There is a difference, however."

"You must be lynx-eyed to discover it."

"Not at all. Mr. Harper, there, knows very well how a practised eye sees things which an inexperienced one will never perceive. His frontier life has taught him that."

"Well, roll on, and let's see the end of it."

A brisk walk for a few hundred yards, followed this conversation.

"We must now change our course again," said my father.

"But the path keeps straight on," said Uncle Charley.

"I know it."

“ Well, in the name of Columbus, how are you going to navigate in this blind swamp without path or compass ?”

“ Follow me, and you’ll see, Charley.”

“ Very well, Harry. We are anxious to pursue this Arabian Night’s adventure. How romantic ! Who would have thought that prosy old Hopeton could afford anything of the sort ?”

Once more my father crept on his hands and knees through the swamp, having turned at right angles to the path in which we had been walking ; and again, at the end of a few paces, he rose up in a clear, plain track. Following this for some distance, the nature of the ground began to change, and soon became so miry that it would have been impossible to proceed, but for a very simple contrivance which is common where these swamps exist. At the beginning of the marsh a tree had been felled, and at the end of this one another, and another ; so there was formed a continuous bridge on which we crossed the water and ooze.

At the end of a quarter of a mile, the nature of the ground changed once more ; and this time abruptly, for we stepped off our log-way on firm, solid earth. This latter was, a small, circular island, about an acre in extent, raised a great deal higher than the surrounding swamp. On this island grew forest trees of large size ; and indeed it was exactly like any other upland. Proceeding to the centre of this spot, we found under a group of trees a huge rock, or pile

of rocks, rent into seams and fissures, over which grew wild vines and briers.

"Here is our hiding-place, gentlemen," said my father. "Gaunt is to meet Jake and Joe Warlock at this rendezvous. They think they are well acquainted with the spot; and they *do* know *something* about it; but I will show you one thing of the existence of which they have no idea."

"Wait, Harry," exclaimed Uncle Charley, "I can do it just as well as you can. 'Open Sesame!' Sure enough, it doesn't obey."

"Try again, Charley."

"No; the charm is gone, or I've forgotten the word. Go ahead yourself."

"You see this little fissure in the rock?"

"Yes."

"Through it we are to hear the precious machinations of these young beasts. But the entrance is on the other side. Let's walk round."

When we arrived on the opposite side, a thick vine was drawn away, disclosing an aperture, stopped by a roundish stone, about twice as large as a man's body. This was pushed inward, and following our guide, who dragged himself through this hole, we found ourselves in a cavity of considerable size, where we could stand upright. When we had all passed in, the vine, which was an evergreen, was pulled back to its former position, completely hiding the door-way from any who might view the rock from the outside. Light and air came in through

various cracks and apertures around, so that we were comfortable enough.

"Now, gentlemen," said our conductor, once more, "let us all get as near this side as we can, conveniently ; for the plotters will sit just outside here, and we must hear their conversation."

"And now," he continued, as we all obeyed, "we must maintain perfect silence ; for there is no knowing how soon those fellows will be here. They may come before the appointed time."

It is useless to detail the circumstances which followed. Our plan was carried out successfully. After hearing enough from the Warlocks to criminate them in a court of justice, we emerged, silently, from our concealment, crept round, and were upon them before they were aware of our approach. Never were men more astonished. They had no idea where we had been hid. Few words were wasted. My father stated simply and clearly what we had heard, what would be the consequences were they prosecuted—the fact that if Fitzwarren should be killed, there would now be witnesses to appear against *them* as the probable murderers.

It was an easy matter to exact from them a solemn promise that they would pursue the matter no farther, on condition that we would not institute proceedings against them. We pretended to consider Gaunt as an accomplice, and made him give the same promise that the others did. They left the island in a direction opposite that in which we came. Tom Harper watched them as they filed off.

"Don't they know anything of the other approach, Mr. Hopeton?" he asked.

"No," was the reply, "this by which we came is my private entrance—coming from my plantation, you know. We are now standing nearly on a line between Warlock's plantation and mine. However, Gaunt knows all about the way we came."

"I can very readily imagine they don't know your entrance," said Uncle Charley, "for though I came in by it two hours ago, hang me if I can see where it is now."

And, in truth, though I had been to the spot a few times before, I myself could not fix my eyes on the exact place where we had entered—the end of the log off which we had stepped, being completely hidden from view.

"More than that, Harry," resumed Uncle Charley, "I don't believe you yourself can find egress, and the finale of our romantic adventure will be a blind struggle through mud and briers to get out of this infernal swamp."

"Don't be uneasy, my drawing-room friend," was the reply. "Trust to my guidance once more, and I will lead you safely out of this 'slough of despond,' into which you have fallen."

Again we "followed our leader," and were soon in the saddle and on our way home.

The reader need hardly be told that Uncle Charley's ignorance was affected; that he was wearing his mask that morning, as he always did in the com-

pany of strangers. Never was there a truer *man*, in every sense of this word, than this fashionable old bachelor. He was capable of taking care of himself everywhere.

Chapter Fourteenth.

SEVERAL merry weeks did we all spend at Hopeton. Various were the means to which we resorted for amusement; and among them all, flirtation seemed to be in most repute. Many of our guests were fashionable people, however, and they began to leave for the watering places. Of all the flirtations commenced, that between Uncle Charley and the queenly Mrs. Holmes, was the only one which seemed to result in anything serious. My father and I watched these experienced stagers very closely, and, in spite of their self-control, we thought we could discover evidence of genuine feeling in both. Indeed, as the reader already knows, the gentleman had made a confession; the lady, however, strove hard to conceal the real state of her heart.

But they left Hopeton without coming to any understanding.

"I don't know whether Mrs. Holmes is so heartless as she is represented to be," said my father, "but I have watched her narrowly, and I am satisfied of one thing—that she either *loves* Charley or *hates* him.

She is not indifferent toward him. Which is it, Mrs. Hopeton? You women know each other best."

"In this instance, though," said my mother, "I am very much at a loss myself."

"Mrs. Holmes did not make you her confidant, then?"

"No. And if she had, do you suppose I would tell you anything? Besides, if she had told me that she loved Charley, how would I know that she was not weaving meshes for him, knowing how intimate he is with us?"

"True. However, I suppose you used your powers of observation?"

"Yes, but have come to no conclusion. I can't help thinking, though, that Charley and Mrs. Holmes might love each other, did they not entertain a mutual fear, and a doubt of each other's sincerity?"

"I think you have formed a correct judgment, Mrs. Hopeton."

"Indeed, Mr. Hopeton, you know Charley has acknowledged his love. I rather think, as I have already said, that Mrs. Holmes would return his affection, could she be persuaded he was not trying to get that threatened advantage."

"Well, they are suffering now for their former folly. Let them pass. They may meet at Philippi—*id est*, Catoosa."

"And may understand each other, or may not. If they do not, they can blame nobody but themselves."

Soon Hopeton was entirely deserted by its guests.

The fashionables went to fashionable resorts. Fitzwarren also went—no one knew where.

"I don't know, myself," said he, "where I'll go. Perhaps to some of your watering places—perhaps to Canada. But I shall be in my rooms at the University, at the opening of next term. I hope you will come promptly, Hopeton."

"You may look for me on the first day of the term," was my reply, as I shook his hand.

Tom Harper went home. My parents wished to go up the country for a few weeks, and proposed for me to go with them.

"As you will be gone but a short time," said I, "and Tom Harper has asked me to visit him, now, I think is the most favorable time for me to do so."

Accordingly, while Mr. and Mrs. Hopeton went among the fashionables, I spent a most agreeable fortnight with my companion of the prairies. At the end of that time, I returned home, and the rest of the vacation I spent with best friends—my parents.

October again found me leading the life of a student—sometimes merry, sometimes sad; sometimes quiet and studious, occasionally rattling and boisterous. I continued, however, to devote most of my time to books, and made tolerably fair progress. The next two or three years I passed pretty much as I had begun—studying at the University, during term time, and generally going home during vacation.

Fitzwarren and I became more and more intimate, and even attached to each other; though, still, a cer-

tain reserve manifested itself whenever our conversation took a turn which would seem to require him to speak of himself. Indeed, he *would not* say anything with regard to his former history, but always managed, coldly and calmly, to introduce other topics. Generally he spent part of the vacation with me; and sometimes we travelled through the mountains of Georgia. I even enticed him to Catoosa, once, but with great difficulty. When not with me, he either stayed at the University, or made excursions of which he never afterward spoke, and concerning which I, together with every one else, was entirely ignorant.

And so the *tempus fugited* during my collegiate course.

Chapter Fifteenth.

IN East Florida, near enough the coast to catch the pleasant sea-breeze which forms so delightful a feature of climate, stood Bentwold, the residence of Horace Bentley, Esq. At a considerable distance from the house, ran a public road, immediately on the side of which a spacious gateway opened into the grounds of the estate.

Just inside this gate commenced a broad, smooth carriage road, winding gracefully through a singularly beautiful piece of forest, composed almost en-

tirely of evergreens. From the public road, the house was plainly discernible, being on a considerable elevation; but after passing through the gateway, the visitor could no longer see it, hidden as it was by the sudden turnings and meanderings of the road.

On each side of the carriage-way was a line of noble live-oaks and magnificent pines, grown to an enormous size; and the long, outstretched arms and mossy trunks of the former contrasted in a striking manner with the tall, straight shafts and compact foliage of the latter.

The forest stretched away as far as the eye could reach, on either hand, and was intersected by numerous cleanly-kept roads, over which one could easily imagine how delightful it would be to walk or ride. The whole of the wood had been entirely cleared of undergrowth, and presented one vast pleasure-ground, so clean, that even a fashionably-attired lady might wander through it without the danger of forming "entangling alliances" with briars or brushwood.

At some distance from the public highway, a sudden turn in the carriage road brought one in full front view of the house, standing on a beautiful and gently rising eminence. Here the character of the growth began to change; and near the building it partook of the nature of shrubbery, but such shrubbery as, in a colder climate, would be called trees. Here, indeed, commenced a grove fit for the habitation of Houris. Not all the gorgeous magnificence of oriental scenery could excel that scattered by Nature's lavish hand, in this obscure corner of the New World.

The imagination might in vain exhaust itself in the effort to conceive of a scene more surpassingly lovely than that here displayed ; and with it art had comparatively little to do. The magnolia and the orange had long grown, and but little more was required than to thin them out, and prune them of some of their too luxuriant growth.

The priceless shrubs and flowers, elsewhere nursed in hot-houses, here mingled their intoxicating perfumes, flourishing in the open air, with a luxuriance of growth, a brilliancy of color, and a deliciousness of odor, unknown to the sickly productions of forcing beds.

In parts of this grove the trees were so scattered that it was easy to wander among them in all direction, always protected from the rays of the sun by the locked branches overhead. Again, there were groups and lines of varied form, and occasionally, clumps of beautiful vines and thick-growing shrubs. There were also vistas, and far-reaching openings, through which one might catch glimpses of distant objects—the heavy forest, the white sandy beach, or the bright water, with a boat or sail on its rippling bosom.

Scattered through the whole, were numerous rustic seats and tables, where one might sit and read, or write, or dream, according to the whim of the moment. Pavilions and summer-houses peeped out from canopies of vines and trees ; their dazzling white forming a charming contrast with the dark green of the surrounding foliage.

But why attempt to picture such a scene? Suffice it to say, the grounds around Bentwold were such as excellent taste, great wealth, and a situation peculiarly favored by Nature could produce.

The house itself was large, and imposing in appearance. Entirely around it ran a colonnade, the columns of which were wreathed and festooned all around with vines bearing sweet-scented flowers. The roof this colonnade was continuous with that of the house, thus being above the windows, even of the last story, completely shading them, and the numerous little balconies which were hung out at various points.

The windows were cut down to the floor, and capable of being thrown open from top to bottom, affording free ingress to the glorious breezes which swept through the magnificent groves around the house, and wafted sweet odors into the rooms.

In building this house, the object had been to make it comfortable and pleasant, and at the same time as handsome as could be, consistently with the two first-named objects; and, although it may have had what pedantic architects would term architectural defects, it was appropriate to the climate in which it was situated, and, for that reason, in good taste.

Around the sides, and in the rear of the building, the same taste had been displayed; and the most gorgeous flowers combined with the most beautiful shrubbery, to afford a continual feast to the eye; while, standing in the colonnade, one could see, afar

off, the snow-white beach, and the bright and bounding water, with the white-crested waves chasing each other and dashing upon the sandy shore.

Here, too, the breeze came fresh and strong, cooling the blood, fanning the temples, and wantoning with the hair—sighing through the orange trees, and scattering their blossoms in at the doors and windows of Bentwold.

It was an hour to sunset, and a group, consisting of Mr. Bently, Mrs. Bently, and their three handsome children, was collected at the rear of the house, where they could catch the sea-breeze, and be sheltered from the burning rays which had been pouring down all day.

Mr. Bently was in the prime of life—almost young—at least, young to be the father of grown-up children. He was a noble looking man, with a real *thoroughbred* appearance. At this time he was lounging in slippers and the lightest kind of summer costume, enjoying a fragrant cigar. A careless observer, judging from his present indolent appearance and attitude, would have pronounced him to be an elegant and lazy gentleman, entirely in love with ease and luxury; but an occasional compression of his thin lips, a fiery glance of his dark eye, and a fierce dilation of the nostril, gave evidence of an energy and impetuosity of disposition completely at variance with his present appearance.

Indeed, his countenance could change instantly, from an expression of the most winning kindness, or

most idle languor, to one of the most vital energy, or most haughty sternness.

Near by, in a luxurious rocking-chair, sat Mrs. Bently, the beautiful wife of the gentleman just described. She retained nearly all the grace and comeliness which once rendered her the belle, where, to be such, required a combination of beauty and talent which is rarely to be found. She had auburn hair, with glorious eyes of a color to correspond. Her features were rather of the Grecian mould, but with more of animation and expression than is commonly supposed to characterize that style.

She was fondly gazing on her children—her jewels.

Of these, Frank was a tall, rather slender, but well-proportioned, handsome youth, with the dark hair and eyes of his father, whom he greatly resembled. The same firm, but handsomely-cut mouth, and proudly-dilating nostril, characterized both. Unlike his father, at that time, though, Frank was all animation, talking gayly and banteringly with his sister Helen.

Helen Bently! How shall I describe what it would have been the proudest task of a Reynolds to paint—the beauty of Helen Bently? I am writing of one born and reared in a land where Nature has exhausted her ingenuity in conceiving and perfecting the most glowing combinations of form and feature ever sent to ravish the soul of man. Still, even here, she was considered surpassingly, unapproachably beautiful.

Inheriting the dark hair and eyes of her father, in her those eyes assumed an expression of soul and tenderness—intoxicating and love-inspiring—such as belongs only to woman's eyes. With the beautiful features of both parents combined, and excelling both, she might have passed for the realization of the poet's brightest and most enthusiastic dream.

A figure which might "serve as a model for a piece of statuary, the most faultless in its proportions which ever emanated from the hands of the most inspired sculptor—a foot which the wild and free-born Arab would say could belong to none but a patrician of the highest blood—a hand which the poetic imagination of a Byron would declare that none but the proudest born dame could possess—a neck that swan of snowiest down might have envied—a head which bore itself with such firmness and pride, yet with such womanly reserve and modesty, as might well have become a maiden queen—all these were features which constituted her beautiful.

Helen was considered peerless, in a land where beauty is the rule, rather than the exception.

She was attired for a ride with her brothers, and stood, whip in hand, near one of the orange trees, which protruded its branches within her reach, as if anxious to offer the incense of its fragrance at the shrine of her loveliness.

Romping about among the trees below, was Walter, the youngest of the party. Blue eyes, auburn hair, and an expression of reckless fun and devilry, char-

acterized Master Walter's appearance. His riding suit was a somewhat fantastic one, of his own choosing and getting up. He was frolicking with some dogs—a shaggy Newfoundland, which he claimed as his own property—a couple of splendid pointers, owned by Frank—and a pretty little Italian greyhound, which recognized Helen as its mistress.

Reader, does your mind's eye take in all the features of the scene I have been trying to sketch? A noble colonnade, with vines and flowers the brightest—a gentleman in the prime of life, and of a noble presence—a beautiful and dignified matron—a handsome youth—the fairest of maidens—below, a curly-headed boy, gambolling among the shrubbery—beyond, in front, all around, a grove where the golden hue of the orange, the dark glossy green of the evergreen foliage, the snowy white of magnolia blossoms, and all the colors of tropical flowers mingle in magnificent and gorgeous harmony; while still farther stretches the forest, till it fades as it approaches the beach, and the white line of the latter marks the edge of the water, receding till it meets the azure sky, bluer than that of Italy!

But now the horses come bounding up, ridden by grooms of a polished ebony color—*id est*, by the blackest sort of little *niggers*—generalled by Charles William Henry, a wild, devilish young darkey, who usually followed Frank Bently wherever he went. Frank's horse was a magnificent blood-bay, which bore eagerly on the bit, and trod the earth as though

he were its monarch. Helen's was a beautifully dappled gray, with arching neck and snow-white main and tail. Walter's glossy little black showed a spirit full as high and proud as the others. Charles William Henry rode a fine colt, as wild as himself, and he came rearing and plunging.

Walter mounted quickly, as soon as the horses came up, and the excited dogs ran after him, leaping and barking.

"A pleasant ride to you," said Mr. Bently, as Frank took Helen's hand, and the two tripped gayly down the steps.

"Walter, don't make your horse cut such capers," said Mrs. Bently, who, though a bold horsewoman, did not quite like the wild curvetings of the fiery little black.

"Never mind," answered Walter, "I'll take care of my neck, mother."

"Charles, you black rascal," again spoke Mr. Bently, "what are you teasing and fretting that colt so, for? Make him hurt himself while you are gone, and you'll repent it."

"Lord, master," answered the darkey, "I feels de 'sponsibility of my sitevation too much to hurt de colt, which you holds in sich desalted reesteem."

"Yes—I know," said Mr. Bently; and he added: "Frank, you must keep an eye on that hair-brained fool of yours."

"I will, father."

The party set off, the well-trained negro keeping

his position in the rear, despite the chafings of the eager colt. They rode to the beach, and just as their horses' feet struck the hard sand, the sun was sinking. It was deliciously cool and pleasant.

"How I do love this ride," exclaimed Helen. "They talk of the monotony of the seashore, but I see enough of variety in the rippling of the water and the ever-varying forms of the line of shore, to interest me every day. Then the sight of strange sails is always sufficient to excite conjecture and interest."

"Perhaps," answered her brother, with a quizzical smile, and peeping round into her eyes, "perhaps you had better mention that this particular part of the seashore is frequented by certain nice young men—by a Mr. Dick Butler, in particular—who contribute to render monotonous sand banks interesting."

"And if," retorted Helen, "I should fail to mention that these young gentlemen are frequently seen in company with their sisters—such pretty girls as Miss Clara Butler, for instance, I should certainly fail to mention the chief attraction which this spot possesses for Mr. Frank Bently."

"I'm fairly answered, Helen. It is perfectly useless to try to deceive one's sisters in these matters. But I wonder what *has* become of Dick and Clara. I haven't seen them in a week."

"What! Can you not bear a week's absence? Be of good cheer, though; yonder is Clara, now."

"Sure enough. Speak of the ——— angels, and

straightway they appear. Yonder's Dick, too. Let's overtake them."

And without waiting for a word of assent, Frank put his horse into a gallop, while Helen, seeing herself about to be left behind, was fain to follow his example. Dick Butler heard horses' feet behind, and turning, as he perceived who was coming, he halted, and exclaimed :

"Hello, Frank, are you riding a steeple-chase? And Miss Helen," he added, bowing low down to his horse's mane, "how this exercise makes her eyes sparkle, and her cheeks glow!"

"Something else besides exercise, Dick," said Frank.

"Ah! lady," resumed Dick, in such a tone that it was difficult to say whether he spoke seriously or jestingly; "you should never appear on horseback. One finds it hard enough to keep his heart still, and look at you, under any circumstances. To do so when you appear as now is utterly impossible."

"I will remember that compliment, Mr. Butler," said Helen, "and enter it to your credit—to be repaid whenever I am in funds. At present, it is utterly out of the question for me to discharge so heavy an obligation."

"I am glad to see you out once more, Miss Clara," began Frank. "Really, I had begun to fear the moon would forget and forever cease to shine upon its poor brook."

"There, that will do, Mr. Bently," was Clara's re-

ply. "I shall *not* enter that to your credit, for I should never be able to repay so exquisite a compliment; so you may consider it lost, if you expected a return for it, as is generally the case with those who are vain enough to become flatterers."

"And now, Dick," again spoke Frank, "since we have both been so well answered by the ladies, I will answer your question. Know, then, we were not riding a steeple-chase; but I was trying to get in company with your sister, and my sister was riding to overtake you; so fall into ranks."

And with the word he uncereemoniously rode between Dick and his sister, while Butler, with "If you will allow me the honor, Miss Helen," took up his position *en cavalier* with her.

Keenly did those four persons enjoy their ride that evening, for they were young, and their hearts were yet fresh. The world, with its hardening, chilling influence, had not interposed between them and the pleasures of life. Yielding themselves fully to the intoxication of spontaneous gayety, they saw and thought nothing of the dark clouds which, at some period of life, *must* lower over the devoted heads of mortals.

They rode along the beach toward the north, till they came to a road which turned up to the left through the noble forest. This they followed through its deep shades, waking the echoes with laughter, and sometimes with carol, till they came to the road leading by the front gate which opened into the grounds of Bentwold. At this gate they halted.

"Helen," said Clara, "you are my debtor in visiting, and since this was the case, why did you not come over and find out my reason for not taking my accustomed rides?"

"I have been very busy, Clara, but I will call soon."

"Busy! I should like to know," broke in Dick, "what you girls find to be busy about."

"Yes, but it is none of your business, sir."

"Come and see me, Helen," again said Clara, "I have a long talk for you."

"And a precious talk it will be," again said the pertinacious Dick. "I give you fair warning; I shall hide somewhere and listen, just to see if I can find what you two have been so busy about."

"Forewarned, forearmed, my dear brother Dick. Remember the fate of Acteon of old, who was changed into a noble stag for indulging in impertinent curiosity. Take care that you are not changed into a certain animal with long ears, which is not quite so noble a beast."

"Thank God!" said Dick, in so dismal and lachrymose a tone, as to raise a loud laugh. "Thank God! the sex of the present day, though quite as cruel, are not exactly as powerful as those we read of in the Mythology."

"But you will find, sir," said Helen, "that they have quite enough of power to torment you of the sterner sex as you deserve. Indeed, judging from the earnestness of your exclamation, I should say

you had already had practical demonstration of the fact."

"Yes," said Clara, laughing at Dick's confusion, "he has doubtless been jilted."

"Frank, you unfeeling wretch," said Dick, turning to that young gentleman, "why don't you come to my assistance, instead of sitting there, ready to roll off your horse, with laughing?"

"No use, Dick," answered Frank, with the tears of mirth rolling down his cheeks, for he knew something of his friend's discomfiture. "I should only get a broken pate myself, without helping you in the least. They have the whip-hand of you now, so you must grin and bear it. Bide your time, and pay them back when you have the opportunity."

"Well! Every dog has his day, and mine will come. In the meantime, ladies, you can just display your talent for raillery, to the full bent of your inclination."

"But where is Walter?" suddenly exclaimed Helen.

"Here he comes," said Frank.

Turning, they saw the wild boy coming up at full speed, his mettlesome little charger all in a foam, and the darkey, with the colt, pressing hard in the rear. Dick and his sister galloped off, while the Bentlys passed through the gate and wended their way homeward.

Chapter Sixteenth.

HORACE BENTLY was born in Georgia, of wealthy and indulgent parents. Fortunately, he was not easily spoiled, or he certainly would have been ruined by the system pursued in his rearing. However, his father always insisted that it was because Horace was not to be easily spoiled, that he allowed him so much tether. He studied the character of his children, and found with inexpressible joy that his son, though impetuous—which he could excuse, as it was a family failing—had a warm, generous heart, and an innate sense of honor, which would not allow him to be guilty of a mean act, however many he might commit which the world would call rash and imprudent.

If the boy had needed restraint, he said, he would most certainly have imposed it. As a natural consequence of these notions, Horace had few ungratified whims or wishes. He had horses, guns, and dogs, at an age when most boys are satisfied with tops and marbles. Fortunately for him, though, his father had employed a tutor who won his regard, and persuaded him to bestow more time on his books than was thought possible by the neighbors, who saw him running wild over the country.

The elder Bently sent the youth to West Point at an early age. The strict military discipline was little to his taste, however, and petitioning to be taken

away, he returned home, more in love with liberty and Georgia than ever. Still, an irresistible desire to visit Europe possessed him, and having his own way in this, as in every thing else, he soon set out, accompanied by his tutor.

His father had the good sense to insist on this last condition, and Horace consented very readily ; for he loved his guide in knowledge, and delighted in his company.

Never, I ween, was there such a tour made as this of Horace Bently. His tutor could not control him. He could only persuade him, and it must be confessed, that his persuasions were often of little avail. Sometimes the restless youth would travel with all the speed he could command, from one place of pleasure and—the truth will out—of dissipation, to another ; then stopping for weeks and months, unpacking his books, he would study with all the avidity of the most inveterate book-worm.

Now frequenting some old gallery, hung with productions of the master-spirits of art, he studied them with all the enthusiasm of his nature—then betting with a recklessness which seemed madness, in some Parisian “hell.” To-day reposing peacefully and quietly in a rural villa on the banks of the “willowly Loire” or “melancholy Po,” where everything was so still and calm, it seemed as if no dream of ambition, or pleasure, or love, could ever disturb him who had once tasted of its delicious repose—to-morrow, hunting the *wilde schwein* in a German forest.

At one time he lingered with his tutor on some classic spot—the very Mecca of the literary pilgrim—again he plunged into the vortex of dissipation at some European capital. Now he laughed amid the *grisettes de Paris*, or stole glances with a dark-eyed Circassian. Such were some of the features of this extraordinary tour.

Horace also endeavored to attain all the accomplishments which he considered a necessary part of the education of a gentleman. He had a very decided talent for them all, too; and, after spending three or four years abroad, he returned just such a young man as susceptible young ladies fall in love with.

The youth had some peculiar notions. For instance, he believed that our very passions might be rendered useful, when properly controlled and directed—that so long as the man is master of his passions, he can make them answer a good end; but he well knew that if the passions were the master, they would render their subject miserable, as all tyrants do their slaves.

For these reasons he endeavored *merely* to control, and not to eradicate, his passions. He did not wish to destroy the spirit of anger, because that acting with his sense of justice, would cause him to knock down a stronger party for oppressing a weaker one, when if this support had not been given to the sense of justice, this last might have been entirely overcome by caution or prudence, and the oppressed would have gone unavenged.

In this case, anger is made to assist justice. On the contrary, were the passion the *master*, it might force its slave into the commission of the crime of homicide.

Horace, then, tried to attain great self-control ; but of course it is not claimed that he never was hurried into the commission of rash and foolish acts. The man born with strong passions, can never so entirely subject them to his control that no combination of circumstances is able to force him to act inconsiderately.

Among the *harmless* peculiarities of the man we speak of, was an extraordinary fondness for orange trees. The sight or thought of an orange grove always stirred up within his breast ideas of romance and poesy. He could never find words to express the intense delight with which he used to wander through the orange groves of Spain.

Singularly enough, orange trees and sea-breezes were always associated together in his mind, and he could not think of one without being reminded of the other. He loved Georgia, and determined never entirely to desert his native State ; but he also resolved to gratify the predilections above mentioned, by building a house where he could enjoy the two much-coveted luxuries.

The idea of going to Cuba occurred to him, but he could not consent to live elsewhere than under the protection of the stars and stripes. His attention was very naturally directed to Florida, and he visit-

ed that State. Fortune favored him to a remarkable degree, for at the house of an old friend of his father he met Miss Arlington.

I need only say, that she was a lady calculated to take the heart of Horace Bently by storm. He who at one time, had been flattering himself that he could bind or loose his affections as he listed, found that he had been laboring under a great mistake; and he loved Miss Arlington.

Miss Arlington had a cousin—Ben Wycliffe—a fierce, reckless fellow, who had persecuted her with offers of marriage, since she was a girl. His savage temper and well-known daring, had at length driven off nearly all the suitors who had at first thronged around her. This fact, though, so far from frightening Horace, acted as an incentive to induce him to woo the lady; for he was foolish enough, sometimes, actually to court danger and difficulty. He won Miss Arlington's love, and then he was ready to face a legion of devils in defence of his claims.

Ben Wycliffe soon heard how matters were going, and he raved and swore like a maniac. His associates tried hard to prevent a rencontre between him and Horace Bently, but in vain. The hair-brained fool sought his successful rival and insulted him in public. Of course he was knocked down for his pains, and on picking himself up, he drew a pistol. One was promptly produced by his foe, and wild work would have been done, had not some one struck the pistol from Wycliffe's hand. Horace was too

chivalrous to fire on an unarmed man, and, for the time the thing stopped.

The next day, the discomfited fellow sent a challenge to Horace. The latter accepted it, and offered choice of weapons. Wycliffe chose rifles, thinking his antagonist was unacquainted with that arm. He reckoned without his host, however; for in the duel which followed, he was carried off the field a cripple for life, while his antagonist escaped unscathed.

So Horace carried off the prize—Miss Arlington; and what was *bet*—at least what was *very well*—he received with her the estate on which he afterward built the house described to the reader.

Chapter Seventeenth.

ONE day Frank Bently and Walter went to D——. The sunset came on, and Helen and her parents were again in the colonnade.

"Father," said Helen, "have you given up riding on horseback?"

"Why, what are you thinking of, Helen?" answered Mr. Bently, "I ride every day. This very morning I rode all over the plantation."

"Oh, I don't mean that sort of riding. I speak of the delightful gallops between sundown and dark, just for the sake of the champagne-like exhilaration attendant on such exercise."

"Ah! oh! That is it, eh?"

"That is just what I mean."

"Well, I am very much of the opinion that such 'gallops' are incomplete in the eyes of sentimental young ladies without the attendance of gallant and youthful cavaliers."

"I admit, father, that these last do render a ride rather more pleasant than they are without such accompaniments."

"Then, Miss Helen, as I am neither very youthful nor gallant, I would make a poor cavalier; so I must e'en beg you to excuse me."

"Oh," said Helen, "but you are the only chance. I shall be fain to rest satisfied with what I can get."

"Much obliged, Miss Helen," replied Mr. Bently, settling himself down still more lazily in his easy seat, and puffing out the curling cigar-smoke still more luxuriatingly. "Thank you, I'm *very* well situated."

"Why, father," exclaimed Helen, "*won't* you ride?"

"What! Abandon my present precious *dolce far niente* for a jolting gallop with a giddy-brained girl, who is willing to put up with me merely because she can do no better?"

And Mr. Bently *enveloped* himself in the odoriferous clouds of his cigar.

"I am sure, you look young yet, father, if not youthful, and you are better looking than most young men."

"Ah! this delightful cigar!" soliloquized Mr Bently. "I must write to Hooks & Bangs to send me another thousand, before they sell them all."

"But that need not hinder you from riding, now," persisted Helen.

"I have not smoked a more pleasantly flavored article in a great while."

Helen now concluded to change her tactics.

"Mother," said she, "you were once very fond of riding, but your favorite Don Carlos has now been idle in his stable, lo! these many days."

"Oh, I acknowledge, daughter," was the reply, "that I have grown quite lazy." And Mrs. Bently leaned listlessly back and rocked herself quietly and gently.

"But, dear mother, your health will suffer, if you take so little exercise."

"I am very well, Helen—thank you."

"I declare, you look pale, even now."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Bently.

"What are you laughing at, father?"

"To see how cunning you are. You take advantage of the Parian fairness of your mother's complexion to persuade her that she needs exercise knowing well that, if she rides, I am bound to attend her."

"Certainly you must."

"And in this way you will get a cavalier."

"Yes, sir—one that will do pretty well, unless meet with a better one in my ride."

But after a little more of this badinage, three horses were brought around, and three riders mounted and dashed off merrily from the house.

"Let us ride to meet Frank and Walter," said Mrs. Bently.

"Agreed," was the response, and they turned their horses' heads toward D——.

They had not proceeded far, before they saw Frank and Walter coming toward home, and with them two strangers. As the two parties drew near each other, that from Bentwold scanned the features of the strange gentlemen. One of these was of striking appearance—pale, handsome, with coal black hair, piercing black eyes, and long, drooping, black moustache. He was of medium size, with a graceful and symmetrical figure, which betokened strength and activity.

The other was somewhat younger—not ill-looking, with a pretty good figure, and eyes which could at least gaze on beauty till their owner was intoxicated with its charms.

In the first stranger, no doubt the reader has already recognized Fitzwarren. The other was your humble servant, Jack Hopeton. I had graduated and left the University. For a year before I left, Fitzwarren had been very irregular in his studies, being frequently absent several weeks, or a month at a time. Indeed, he did not spend much over half his time at the University.

He and I were a good deal with each other, though

whenever he was at the University, and when he left, at the same time I did, we had travelled together for some time.

We were presented in due form, by Frank Bently, to his father, his mother, and his sister. I need not describe Helen Bently again to the reader. On that evening, in her picturesque riding costume, as she sat, her cheeks glowing with exercise, and her eyes sparkling, reining in her eager charger, and receiving our salutations with such dignity and grace as no queen could excel, she was beautiful, as only those of our clime can be beautiful.

It has long been a vexed question, whether there is such a thing as love at first sight. It all hinges on the definition of the word, love. The world will probably be divided in opinion on the subject, till the end of time. I will not enter into the discussion of an abstract question here ; but I will say that, when, on being introduced to Helen Bently, I looked on those finely chiselled features, and that beautifully moulded form—above all, when my eyes met hers, and looked flutteringly and bewildered into the depths of soul which appeared in them, I *fell* suddenly, deeply, and irrevocably in love.

Foolish enough it was, doubtless, but it was all done without any act or volition on my part, and I cannot be blamed if I was wrong. Somehow, in the changing which took place, as we started on the way back to Bentwold, I found myself by the side of Miss Bently, and in the rear of the party.

Some men, when drunk, have sense enough to know it, and try to conceal it by avoiding company and conversation. Others, again, try to hide it by talking gravely and reasonably. There are still others who never know when they are under the influence of liquor, and consequently take no pains to show that they are not. Of all these, he who tries to converse soberly is the one who appears most ridiculous.

On the day I first saw Helen Bently, I was fully aware that I had fallen under the intoxicating influence of love, and that my wisest course would be to seek some other companion in the ride than her who had been the cause of my hallucination; but it was a pleasure to me to hear the tones of her voice, and to meet her eyes, occasionally, as she would sometimes turn them on me in answering or asking a question. Oh! how pleasant was the dawn of love!

I think, too, that I managed to refrain from rendering myself *very* ridiculous. If Helen Bently had been vain as some girls, she might have perceived immediately that she had made a conquest. She was *not* vain, however, and had never been much into the world. Indeed she was just out, and though lady-like and self-possessed, her feelings were genuine. She had not acquired the artificial manners and sentiments of society.

As for me, I had, by dint of hard struggling, acquired considerable control over features which,

when I was a boy, always told what was passing in my mind ; and, by being pretty often in the company of ladies, I had become tolerably well acquainted with the general range of topics which please them.

Yet I hardly know what I said to Helen Bently during that ride. At least my recollection of the conversation is not sufficiently distinct to enable me to record it.

We were left pretty much to ourselves, though I noticed that Fitzwarren looked back occasionally.

That night we sat round Mr. Bently's hospitable board.

"I must tell you all, now," said Frank, "how I became acquainted with these gentlemen ; and it will reveal a little incident in my life, concerning which none of you know anything."

"Better let it pass, Mr. Bently," said I.

"There we differ, though," resumed Frank ; "I must acquaint my family with the gallant service you once rendered me, and then they will know how to treat you."

I tried to speak again.

"Never mind," said he, "I will spare your modesty as much as I can, to do justice to your chivalry. Last summer, father, I was travelling among the mountains of Georgia, while you all were located for the season. I met a great many people of different characters. I stopped in a little village one evening, where I had never been before, and had not a single

acquaintance. In the piazza of the hotel where I *put up*, sat three or four men conversing.

"Seating myself in the same piazza, but as far as possible from them, I took up a newspaper with which to amuse myself till supper. For some time I paid no attention to the *fish* party ; but finally they began to indulge in pointless witticisms on Georgia and Georgians.

"I soon found from their significant glances, that they were very anxious for me to overhear them. They supposed I was alone, and they could insult me with impunity. With this view, they became more and more pointed in their remarks, and more insulting in the looks they directed toward me.

"Finally I rose and walked over to them.

" 'Gentlemen,' I began with a low bow, 'judging from circumstances, I conclude that you intend the remarks you are making, as an insult to me. Will you please inform me whether or not I am correct in my surmises ?'

" 'Really, sir !' said one of them, coolly enough, and in a jeering tone, 'I don't see what right you have to ask the question. We have not spoken a single word to you, and as you are a perfect stranger to us, it cannot be presumed that we knew our remarks would offend you.'

" 'What you say wears some appearance of plausibility,' answered I. 'I will not say what bad taste and want of good breeding you display by indulging in ill-natured and would-be-witty remarks in the

presence of one who, as you say, is a perfect stranger to you, and who may, by any possible chance, be one of the persons you abuse. To cut the matter short, I declare that you *did*, by your manner, give me reason to suppose that you were offering me an insult, and I demand from you, sir, an avowal or disavowal of such intention.'

" 'And suppose,' answered the one I had now singled out, 'I should refuse to give you either?'

" 'Then,' answered I, 'you force me to the disagreeable necessity of pulling your nose, or striking you in the face!'

" 'You see, father,' said Frank, apologetically, 'I had began to lose my temper.'

" 'What is your answer, sir?' said I, seeing the man hesitate. 'If you fail to disavow any intention of insulting me, I demand the satisfaction due from one gentleman—if you *are* a gentleman—to another. If you are not a gentleman, this riding-whip shall be my avenger.'

" 'But where is your friend?' asked the fellow.

" 'I will procure one by to-morrow afternoon.'

" 'Yes,' answered he, now seeing a way to get out of the difficulty, 'that is true, no doubt, but we must leave this place early to-morrow morning.'

" 'See here, sir,' said I, for my blood had got fully up, although I did not lose control over myself, 'you perceive this riding-whip? Unless you consent to remain and give me satisfaction, I shall apply it to your shoulders, you cowardly poltroon!'

“This I was determined to do ; for I was well armed—travelling in the mountains it’s best you know—and risk their worst. While I was allowing the puppy a moment to decide, these two gentlemen here, Mr. Fitzwarren and Mr. Hopeton, stepped out of a room opening on the piazza.

“ ‘We have heard your conversation, sir,’ said Mr. Hopeton to me. ‘I am a Georgian, and shall be proud to act as your friend, in this matter.’

“ ‘And I,’ said Mr. Fitzwarren, ‘can assure you that you could have no better friend. As he is a Georgian, and I am not, of course I must yield him the honor of acting in this case.’

“ ‘I shall be much obliged to you both, gentlemen, to give me your assistance in this matter. My father is a Georgian by birth, and we spend nearly half our time in this State, at a residence he still owns.’

“With two such friends as Mr. Hopeton and Mr. Fitzwarren, matters were soon arranged. They were cool and peremptory. Somewhat to my surprise, the man with whom I had had the altercation, chose to meet me rather than apologize.

“Next morning, before breakfast, we exchanged shots, and I sent a bullet into snob’s shoulder—I didn’t want to hurt him much—while I got off with a very slight flesh wound.

“You may be sure I cultivated the acquaintance of my two friends. Several weeks in their company gave me a high opinion of their merit, and I invited

them to come and see us. Yet they were passing as near to us as D—— and did not even intend to let me know they were there. Fortunately, I saw their names on the hotel register, and almost dragged them home with me.”

During all this recital, Fitzwarren was sipping his tea, or dallying with his toast, while the old expression of disdainful abstraction, with which I had become so well acquainted, brooded over his countenance. Occasionally a smile of mingled bitterness and melancholy would flit across his features, and then leave them cold and rigid. Sometimes, too, he would gaze earnestly at Helen Bently, to see how she regarded the matter.

“Pray, Mr. Bently,” said I to Frank’s father, “how do you like the part we acted?”

“You have placed us all under obligations, gentlemen, which we will endeavor to repay by all the means in our power.”

“Madam,” now said Fitzwarren to Mrs. Bently, “I was sure that the father would thank us for the part we acted; but I fear that this recital has lowered us as much in your opinion, as it has elevated us in his.”

“You acted,” began Mrs. Bently, “from a noble impulse I suppose, and—”

“Not impulse, madam,” interrupted Fitzwarren, “so far as I am concerned—though you must recollect that my friend Hopeton acted the principal part, and to him your thanks are mainly due—so far as I

am concerned, I acted from a long-settled principle—one which I think I can support with strong arguments, though this is not the time nor the place for it.

“But I humbly beg your pardon, madam, for interrupting you. Please say on.”

“I set out to say this,” resumed Mrs. Bently. “If either of you had persuaded my son to fight a duel against his inclination, or judgment, then—excuse my candor—I should hate and despise you. Since you assisted him to carry out an intention already formed, and it was one considered justifiable by a great many men—my husband among the number—however much I may disagree with you all, I am bound to thank you for acting as friends to my boy.”

Fitzwarren heard these words with a deep bow, and then turned his dark, handsome, calm-looking eyes inquiringly toward Helen Bently. She encountered them steadily, and neither spoke. But I wished to hear what she thought of our adventure.

“Miss Bently,” said I, “as a true and gallant knight, I am anxious to know whether my conduct in this affair meets with your approbation.”

Again I encountered those eyes, now eloquent with emotion, as she replied :

“My mother has expressed my feelings exactly, and I must add my thanks to hers. Indeed, at the risk of being considered unfeminine by you, I must say, that I can’t bear the idea of a brother or father submitting to insult.

"Ah! Helen," said her mother.

"Perhaps I am wrong, mother; but how can I change my nature?"

"And how, Miss Bently," said I, "would you like the lover who would submit tamely to insult?"

"Least of all," was the reply. "Such a craven could not be a lover of mine." And her eye flashed, and her nostril dilated proudly.

"Helen," said her mother, "if men's passions needed arousing, there might be some propriety in speaking thus; but it is the province of woman to lay the demons, anger and revenge. Her mission is not to stir up strife, but it is one of peace. It is for her, by gentle words and kindly acts, to subdue and soften the quarrelsome and turbulent spirit which reigns in the bosom of the sterner sex."

"You are right," answered Helen, as her whole mood seemed to change from proud defiance to maidenly gentleness. "You are right, mother."

"Suppose, for instance, brother," added she, turning to Frank, "you had killed that man, merely for speaking a few arrogant words."

"You put rather a strong case," said Frank, "but I had no more idea of killing him, than I have of killing you at this moment."

"Shoot at a man, and have no idea of killing him!"

"Exactly!"

"Suppose, then, you had killed him accidentally."

"I handle a pistol too well for that. I merely in

tended to punish his impertinence, by hitting him in the shoulder."

"You were right, Frank," here spoke Mr. Bently. "We should never seek the life of a fellow-man, except for the gravest considerations. That cur, though, deserved just the punishment he got."

"But think," interposed Mrs. Bently, "of the risk Frank ran, of being killed himself."

"Of course," answered the young gentleman, "there is some risk in all duels; but where one is a good shot, there is no more danger than there is in a thousand other things we do, every day of our lives. Think of galloping a horse. If the girth breaks, or the horse falls, you may be severely hurt—perhaps killed. You may trip in running down a staircase, and if your head shall strike the landing first, as it probably will, your neck will not be worth much."

"It depends, then," said Helen, "on whether a man is a good shot, whether—"

"We'll come to that presently, Helen," resumed Frank, interrupting. "Though, right here, I will acknowledge that there are some apparently insuperable arguments against duelling, and you were probably thinking of one then."

"But I say if we *look* for danger, we can find it on all sides, at every moment; for our lives are *full* of it. They hang by the most brittle threads. Then when we are *constantly* exposed to danger and cannot possibly escape such exposure, the fear of it should not prevent us from resenting an insult."

"It is useless," said Mr. Bently, "to discuss such a question as this. We shall never arrive at a conclusion. As Frank says, there are some arguments against duelling which are insuperable. There are others in favor of it, which are equally unanswerable. Show me the most uncompromising opponent of duelling, and if he has a spark of spirit or human feeling in his bosom, I can put cases to him in which he *must* acknowledge that a duel is the only resort. It is folly to say, that under *no* circumstances is it right to go on the field."

"Perhaps, then," said Fitzwarren, "it is best to lay down no rule for the guidance of a man's conduct in the matter, but let the circumstances of each particular case, as it comes up, decide for him."

"I think so," answered our host.

"I am rather of the opinion," was now my remark, "that men's opinions on questions like this are *instinctive*, and not to be altered by reasoning. For this cause, we ought to be very charitable toward those who entertain opinions different from our own."

"Probably they are," answered Fitzwarren, "but I must acknowledge I have a great contempt for the man who is not willing to hold himself responsible for all his words and acts."

"As it is likely that contempt of yours is instinctive," answered I, "you cannot be blamed for it."

"But such discussions," said Mr. Bently, rising, "are not for the presence of the gentler sex. Let us adjourn to the drawing-room."

"You are a musician, Miss Bently," I said, when I saw several different instruments, and piles of music scattered about the room.

"I must plead guilty to playing a *good deal*, at least," was the candid reply.

"Then if I am allowed to claim anything on the score of services rendered your brother, I petition for some songs. And I think my friend Fitzwarren will join in my request."

"Nothing," said Fitzwarren, in his cold, conventional tone, "could afford me more pleasure than to hear Miss Bently sing."

"Do you like such songs as 'McGregor's Gathering'?"

"Ah yes!" I exclaimed; "and 'The Captive Knight.'"

"The harp is the fit accompaniment for them," was Helen's reply, as she seated herself at that instrument.

Reader have you ever heard the two songs above mentioned? Perhaps you have; but did you ever hear them sung by a proud, imperial-looking beauty, who accompanied her voice with the harp? As Helen Bently's powerful but mellow voice rang out, "Cease the wild clarion," and her glorious eyes lighted up, and her lovely countenance glowed with animation, she seemed the very personification of proud enthusiasm.

And then those model arms! Do young ladies with ugly arms ever play the harp? I believe not

It needed not all this to complete the agitation of the flutterer within my bosom.

These songs were over, at last.

"What now will you have, Mr. Hopeton?" asked the young lady, as she looked up and caught my eye.

"I like variety," answered I. "The songs you have just sung are glorious, but now if you would take the guitar, and favor us with some sweet, simple, expressive little melodies—"

"Oh!" was the reply, "it will never do to 'touch the light guitar' in the house. Let us go out on the colonnade, where the breezes can come to us through the orange groves."

And to the colonnade we went, where some beautiful songs, breathing of love and devotion, warbled in a soft tone, made me conclude that these were the themes, after all, which best suited the voice of Helen Bently.

But all things human have an end, and so, after an hour passed in conversation, Helen bade me good night. I arose, as I returned her good night, and watched her form, as it disappeared through the doorway. Then I sat down and leaned over the balustrade, gazing out on the still night. The moon shone over the scene I have already described to the reader. The gentle dash of the waves on the beach was heard, and a breeze stirred the foliage of the dark evergreens. The odor of orange blossoms, of magnolias, and that most fragrant of all flowers—the cape jessamine—was wafted to me.

Over all, love cast a halo of romance, and its influence steeped my senses in a delicious intoxication, as I thought on the vision of loveliness, brighter than any I had pictured to myself, even in dreams, which had crossed my path.

I don't know how long I sat thus, but I was aroused by Fitzwarren, who asked me if it was not time to go to bed. I rose mechanically, following a servant, who showed me to a room.

The reader need hardly be told, that "sleeping I dreamed."

Chapter Eighteenth.

"GENTLEMEN," said Mr. Bently, next morning at breakfast, "of course that little portmanteau you brought is not all of your baggage. Write a note to your hotel-keeper, and I will send for your trunks."

"We will not need them, sir," answered Fitzwarren. "We must go on to-day."

"That will *never* do," said Mr. Bently. "Frank, you surely are not going to allow your friends to depart so soon?"

"I did my best, yesterday," was Frank's reply "to make them promise to stay a long while, but I could not prevail on them."

"Mrs. Bently," again spoke our host, "and you,

Helen, must try your power of persuasion. Our character for hospitality is at stake."

"If anything I can say, gentlemen," commenced Mrs. Bently, "would have any influence, just consider it as said."

"Come," she added, as we were silent, "I can hardly believe that young gentlemen just out of college are so pressed with business as not to be able to spare a week or two for those who are so anxious to entertain them, and we even flatter ourselves, so capable of doing so."

"We do not doubt your willingness, madam," answered Fitzwarren in his grave tone. "We do not doubt your willingness, nor your capacity, to entertain us, far beyond our deserts—though I beg pardon of my friend; I continually forget that *his* services were far greater than mine. Only the most urgent business could induce us to forego your hospitable invitation."

"Could a simple maiden like myself," now said Helen, as she turned her lustrous eyes from one of us to the other—"Could a simple maiden like myself say aught to change the determination of two of 'creation's lords?' It is only doubt on this point which has kept me so long silent."

For sometime, I had been debating with myself whether, if Fitzwarren could not be prevailed on to remain, I should not suffer him to go on alone. Finally, Helen's bright eyes had settled the question, and the only difficulty consisted in framing an excuse for the

sudden alteration of my plans, since the day previous I had assured Frank Bently that it was utterly impossible for us to spend more than a day or two with him.

I was confident there would be a letter for me in D——, by the next mail, and I thought once I would send for that, and pretend I had received intelligence in it which would allow me to spend a longer time at Bentwold; but the lively tone of Helen's inquiry, determined me on a bold stroke. I would address her in a tone of such exaggerated compliment, announcing my acceptance of their invitation, that they should not suspect how much in earnest I was.

"I cannot answer for Mr. Fitzwarren," said I, "but for myself, I am the slave of beauty, and the slightest wish expressed by one like Miss Bently is to me a law."

"Then," again spoke Helen, "allow me to express a very earnest wish, that you will remain long enough for us to show you how grateful we can be for services rendered to one of our family."

"Mr. Bently," was my answer to this speech, "you may send for my baggage."

At this moment I caught Fitzwarren's eye fixed on me with a look of inquiry, so slight though, that no one not well acquainted with him would have noticed it.

"Mr. Fitzwarren," said Helen, turning to him, "since I have discovered that I have such influence, I am vain enough to imagine that I may even persuade you. What is your answer?"

"Still the same," was the reply ; and Fitzwarren gazed, as if fascinated, into the bright eyes fixed on him.

"Indeed," he continued, while his pale face grew still paler, and his voice sunk almost to a whisper, "Indeed, I *dare not* stay."

"Mr. Hopeton, then, as having obeyed my commands, merits the appellation of 'true and gallant knight,' while you, I am sorry to say prove rather recreant."

All this was said in a gay, playful humor, but hardly a smile did Fitzwarren call to his lips, in response to the general laughter of the party.

"Are you serious," said he to me, at last, "in saying that you intended to remain longer?"

"Never more so," was my reply. "You would not, surely, have me forfeit the good name you perceive I have now gained?"

"No, certainly not," he answered, after a moment's abstraction.

"Well," he added, "as I go alone, my movements perhaps will be more expeditious. I must be off soon."

He rose from the breakfast table, to go to his room, and I followed him.

"And so, Jack," said Fitzwarren, when we were alone, "you love her?"

"It would be useless for me to deny it, Fitz.," replied I, though slightly coloring, as I was somewhat surprised.

"Well, she is worthy of all the wealth of love you can bestow."

"Is she not? I have dreamed of beauty, but never such as hers. Such eyes, such eyebrows! such a magnificent figure!"

"Yes," said Fitzwarren, musingly, "she is indeed lovely. Why are such visions sent on earth to disturb men's hearts?"

"Why! my dear friend? To be worshipped, adored, striven for, sought after, wooed and won!"

"True!" said he, still musing and gazing on me without seeming conscious of it.

"None without hope, can love the brightest fair—
But love can hope, where reason would despair."

"There is no reason why you should not win her. You are good-looking, ardent, eloquent, true-hearted."

"Let me ask you one thing, though, Fitzwarren," said I suddenly. "Have I been so transparent, think you, that the family here have read me as you have?"

"Oh, no. Friendship, like love, is sharp-eyed. I, being acquainted with you, and having studied human nature long and earnestly, was able to see symptoms which entirely escape ordinary observation."

"You relieve me very much."

"For one who is no older than you, Jack, you have a fair share of self-possession."

"I am glad, though, Fitzwarren, to find that you agree with me so well in opinion, concerning Miss Bently."

"The man who differs with you is totally devoid of taste."

"But how long," continued Fitzwarren, "do you remain at Bentwold?"

"A week. Where shall I meet you at the end of that time?"

"In Tallahassee. At least *I* shall be there."

"So will I."

"Provided you can tear yourself away."

"Do not fear me. I will not disappoint you. Have I ever failed to keep an engagement with you?"

"No."

"Nor will I now."

"I have never known you to be in love before, Jack," said Fitzwarren, as a sickly smile flitted across his features.

"That is very true. A new phase of existence seems to be opened to me. 'Still let me love.' 'Tis sweet, oh 'tis sweet.' It is 'joy forever' to love such a being as Helen Bently."

A sort of spasm passed over Fitzwarren's face.

"This tooth!" he exclaimed, as he put up his hand.

"My friend," said I, hardly noticing his exclamation, "it is a luxury to love. You are too cold. Is it not strange that beauty such as Helen Bently's can only extort from you the most commonplace and trite compliments?"

"My God!" he suddenly exclaimed with startling energy. "Would you have me loose my wild spirit? You know it not. Do you wish to see a volcano exposed? What have I to do with love?—unless, indeed, I act up to the spirit of the quotation you made just now—but you did not begin far enough back:

"'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it has *never* moved ;
But though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love !"

"You must excuse me, Jack ;" continued Fitzwarren, "this damned tooth makes me nervous and almost petulant."

It was the first time I had ever heard my friend use an oath on so trivial an occasion, though occasionally I had heard him, when deeply moved, breathe forth maledictions which made my blood run cold.

But he left Bentwold, taking leave of the gentlemen in a rather formal, but very polite way, and bowing almost reverently, as he bade adieu to the ladies.

Chapter Nineteenth.

HOW that week at Bentwold passed, I can hardly tell—pleasantly, though. It turned out that my mother had been well known to Mrs. Bently, in their younger days, so that the Bentlys were very well satisfied as to my family.

I rode, walked, sung, read, with Helen Bently. I didn't tell her I loved her. What was the use? She was a woman, and did women ever require to be told that they were loved? Instinct informs them upon this subject, without the intervention of words.

Oh ! those glorious rides on the beach, " while nature's lyre in one harmonious concert broke." Those bewitching walks through the orange groves, when the full moon poured down her flood of radiance ! " Who could ever be cold or coy, with love and moonlight blessed ?"

Doubtless the reader is very thankful I have forgotten the talks I had with the adored object of my affections. Love-making in novels is generally tiresome to every one but the author, even when indulged in a few scenes at a time. A whole week of love-sick discourse, would " do for" what might be otherwise the best tale ever written.

The first few days of my visit passed swiftly and happily. But the time began to approach when I had promised to meet Fitzwarren, in Tallahassee. As long as there was no immediate prospect of separation, I dreamed on, content that I was allowed to be by Helen's side ; to look on her lovely countenance, to listen to her musical cadences.

The near approach of the time for my departure brought up the painful thought that perhaps I might never again see her whose influence had caused the world—life—to appear to my eyes in brighter colors than ever before.

On the day previous to my departure, we were returning from a ride, in which we had encountered the handsome, dashing Dick Butler, and his charming sister. I was introduced to the former, and could not help being pleased with him ; yet a certain little

thrill of nervousness, or uneasiness—could it be jealousy?—agitated my breast, as I noticed the ease and eloquence of his address, as well as the evident and unconcealed pleasure the meeting seemed to afford Helen.

I was but a human being, and as such liable to annoyance from the green-eyed monster. However, I know I was not *very* jealous, for I had rather too much of another human weakness, to wit: vanity—to suffer a great deal from the first.

But I said we were returning from a ride. I could not resist a certain impulse.

"To-morrow," I began, "I must leave Bentwold."

There was no reply, and I continued,

"This is indeed a delightful portion of country, and my sojourn has been pleasant in the extreme."

I looked at Helen, who seemed to have lost her tongue, but *not* her presence of mind. Once more I essayed.

"Miss Bently, you can never be *ennuyée*, residing among the noble groves, near this pleasant seashore, in the vicinity of such attractive neighbors as those we met but just now."

"You like Clara Butler, then. I am so glad. I assure you she is worthy the admiration of any one."

"Yes; I admire her very much, but young ladies—Miss Bently for instance—might possibly admire the brother more than the sister."

"Oh," was the ready and unembarrassed reply,

"Mr. Butler is one of our nearest neighbors; a noble young man, a great friend of my brother. Our families are very intimate, and I like him very much."

After all, thinks I to myself, I am wasting breath. I can find out nothing, and what right have I to be prying into Miss Bently's secrets, even if she has any! I addressed Helen again:

"I shall never forget the pleasant rides you and I have had together, even if I try. I shall always remember them, and—Miss Bently, I crave permission to remember *you*."

"There is no need of asking permission, Mr. Hopeton," was the reply, "I certainly do not wish to be forgotten by my brother's friend."

"Your brother's friend! Is that all?"

"I know I am talking rather strangely," I continued, "but I wish to think of you as 'my star.' Perhaps it may be as the 'bright particular star' Shakespeare speaks of, but let it be so."

My fair companion seemed at a loss how to reply.

"As for myself, I had rather be hated than forgotten," said I again, "and in all my—but perhaps my garrulity offends Miss Bently?"

She raised her eyes to mine, and I looked eagerly into them, striving to penetrate the very depths of their expression, as she answered:

"I cannot be offended, Mr. Hopeton, at anything which I do not understand."

"I mean," said I, "simply this, that I hope you

will remember me as one to whom your good opinion is worth more than that of all the world besides. At the same time, I ask permission to think of you, as one who has allowed me to partake somewhat of the kindly thoughts which it is natural for you to bestow on all with whom you come in contact."

There was no reply.

"Does this offend you?" I asked.

"Offend me?" was the answer, to me inexpressibly musical. "Offend me? Oh no!"

And our ride was now over.

When far away from Bentwold, I repeated over and over again,

"On the wide sea of life, shines one unclouded light,
And still it burns softest and clearest by night;
But its lustre, though lovely, alas! is afar,
And that is the reason I call thee—my star.'"

Chapter Twentieth.

I REJOINED Fitzwarren in Tallahassee, and we proceeded to travel through some of the wildest portions of Florida. One day we stopped to get dinner at the little village of M——. When we alighted at the door of the tavern, a great crowd of men was collected on the little square, and we perceived evidence of a deep excitement. Groups and knots were collected in various places, conversing

eagerly and hurriedly. So absorbed were they, that the arrival of the mail, usually an event of no inconsiderable importance, was almost unnoticed.

Most of the crowd were armed, some carrying their weapons openly in their hands, while others wore ill-concealed pistols and knives. Another circumstance excited my curiosity :—some of those assembled wore, in their hats, sprigs of pine, and others, sprigs of oak ; and whenever those of different parties passed near each other, they cast stern and vindictive glances, though the wearers of the oak badges were evidently overawed by the superior number of the pine badges.

Soon the dinner-bell rang, and I followed in the wake of a large number to the dining-room. A furious and rapid onslaught was made on the edibles, but a most ominous silence prevailed. However, I could not refrain from asking a man near me what was the meaning of all the excitement I witnessed. He regarded me with a surprised and rather surly gaze, as he replied :

“ Why, there’s hell to pay at the Three Oaks this evening, as you can see, if you’ll take the trouble to go out there.”

“ Where are the Three Oaks ?” I inquired.

“ Follow the crowd after dinner, and you’ll see,” was the gruff reply.

Just then mine host passed, and I addressed him—

“ Landlord, can you tell you where the ‘ Three Oaks ’ are ?”

"About half a mile out here," answered he, pointing as he spoke.

"Well, can you tell me what is to be done there, this evening?"

"Yes; they are going to break the neck of one of the damnedest rascals unhung."

And off ran the landlord, to attend to the wants of his numerous guests.

"Fitz," said I, to my companion, "do you hear all this?"

"Yes," was the cold, laconic reply.

"What do you say to taking off our baggage, and seeing the end of these things?"

"I say that I feel but little disposition to do so."

"But I feel great curiosity in the matter, and hope you'll stop a little while with me."

"Well, then, if your heart is set on it, I'll stay."

"So we took off our trunks, after dinner, and following our table companions, soon found ourselves at a jail. Around this was posted a strong guard, composed of as determined-looking a set of men as I have ever seen. They were armed, not only with pistols and bowie-knives, but also with trusty rifles. They all wore pine badges.

And they had need be resolute, for those of the oak badges were, many of them, dark and stern-looking men, and they cast threatening glances, and muttered ominous words, as they pressed eagerly forward. But a general grasping of weapons on the part of the guard, and those of their party, warned the others not to proceed too far.

When I had approached very near, to my utter astonishment I beheld the familiar features of Gaunt. He recognized me at the same moment, and with a significant gesture, exclaimed :

"Hello, squire ; I've seen you before. My name is Stuart."

By this, I perceived that he wished to conceal his name.

"Certainly you know me, Stuart," answered I ;
"but do tell me what all this means."

"You'll soon see, squire," answered Gaunt. "I can't tell you yet."

"I can't tell you a single thing yet," he continued, seeing curiosity strongly depicted in my face. "When it's all over, then you shall, I think, know everything."

I concluded to remain silent, but the spectators around began to grow impatient, and one near me exclaimed,

"I wonder why the colonel don't come along !"

"'Tis time for him to be here," said another.

"Stuart," again spoke the first, addressing Gaunt, who figured as leader of the guard. "Stuart, do you know when the colonel will come ?"

"Yes," was the curt reply. "He'll come, when he gets ready, and not before ; so just make yourself easy."

"Here he comes," at length exclaimed one, and I turned to look.

The "colonel" was a tall, imposing, but active

and muscular-looking man, clad in a rough hunting suit. Round his frock he wore a belt, in which he carried a pair of pistols and a bowie-knife. Occasionally, he was jostled by some one in the crowd, and then his eye shot forth fierce and fiery glances. If one of his own party was the offender—he wore the pine badge—he merely addressed him with an impatient expression; but when, at one time, a man with an oak sprig stumbled against him, whether from design or accident I could not say, he turned upon him with a glance so tiger-like, and laying his hand on his pistol, muttered an imprecation so frightful, that the fellow, although a rough-looking customer himself, made haste to lose himself in the throng.

Another astonishment awaited me. As the “colonel” approached, I recognized Tom Harper!—I do not recollect whether I informed the reader that for a year or two he had been gone from Georgia, and no one knew his whereabouts—but oh, how changed was his expression! His evil passions appeared to have been developed to such an extent as to obscure all elevated and high-toned feelings.

He was passing by me, when I touched him on the shoulder and caused him to look round. Seeing me without the badge of his party, he started to move on, with a half-stifled curse; but I grasped him firmly by the arm. He again turned quickly, drawing a repeater.

“Tom Harper!” I exclaimed, “*don't* you know me.”

He looked for a moment, and then, with a face lightened up and softened in its expression, he seized my hand, and held it without speaking. At length his countenance resumed its hard, vindictive look.

"I have no time to talk to you, now," he said. "The task before me requires nerve, and if I talk to you, memories of old will leave but little of this. When my work is over, I will tell you all of what has been my fortune since I saw you last. But come now, and see me avenged of mine adversary."

"Here is another acquaintance, Tom," said I, "my friend Fitzwarren."

"Ah, I recollect him well. But follow me."

We followed, as he strode on toward the jail.

"Wait a moment, though," he again said, as he pulled off his cap, and, taking the twig out of it, separated it into two parts, offering me half.

"If you are the same to me," he continued, "that you once were, you will wear this. I cannot explain to you farther than to say that it will be an act of friendship to me, and the wearing of it may be attended with considerable personal danger. Are you armed?"

"Yes," I answered. "You will hardly find me guilty of the folly of travelling in such a country as this, unarmed."

"Well, then, if a fracas occurs, side with the pine twigs."

"Mr. Harper," said Fitzwarren, in his cold, polite manner, "I also am armed, and, if you please, would like to wear your badge."

"I shall be most happy if you will, sir," was the reply, as Tom took a sprig from a bystander and divided it, giving part to Fitzwarren.

Again we followed Tom as he neared the jail.

"Well, Stuart," said he, addressing Gaunt by his assumed name, "I suppose you have the bird safe?"

"I should think so, colonel."

"Bring him out, then."

Several men entered the building, and soon returned with the prisoner in their midst.

"Will wonders never cease?" said I to myself, as I recognized in this man still another acquaintance. I turned to look at Tom, and caught his eye fixed inquiringly on me.

"So you know him?" said he.

"Certainly," I answered. "How could I ever forget Jim Hardaway? But Tom, what in the name of wonder does——"

"Hush Jack! Recollect what I told you. Not now, nor yet in the presence of these, can I speak. You shall soon know all."

Concerning the prisoner, I will here say this much. When I first knew him, I considered him a very good-hearted, clever sort of fellow, with some share of vanity, and a great fondness for the company of ladies. He had a plausible, popular way of his own, which *took* very well with old people, as well as young. In fact most of his acquaintances considered him a good fellow, though some of them knew him

to be rather too fond of brandy. He made shift, however, to conceal his latter failing from most people. Afterward, he joined a temperance society, but finally went back to his first love—the brandy bottle. Some ill-natured persons said he never had quit it.

When the prisoner first came out of the jail, I could perceive on his flushed countenance an eager, excited, but somewhat defiant expression. As he proceeded, he glanced quickly from side to side, but when he saw, all around, nothing but lowering and frowning countenances, all surmounted by the badge hostile to his hopes—especially when he encountered Tom Harper's basilisk eye fixed on him with the glare of deadly hatred—he turned pale and shook with fear.

Seldom has it been my lot to behold a countenance more frightful than Tom Harper's was at that moment. It was livid, and distorted with contending passions—the most hellish triumph, the coldest disdain, the most deadly hatred, and the most loathing, withering contempt. As the prisoner approached, he who was the controlling spirit on this occasion, motioned his guard to stop. Immediately the victim broke out :

“ Oh, Tom ! you *cannot* mean to carry out the purpose you avowed. My God ! To hang me like a dog, without a legal trial ! It is awful ! ”

“ Yes, my very *true* and *faithful* old friend,” was the mocking reply, “ it is a horrid fate ; but the dear people, whom you have so long professed to worship, have willed it.”

"I do not believe the people wish my blood, Tom, if left to themselves."

"Ask them, then," said Tom.

"You know," replied the prisoner in a despairing tone, "it is useless for me to speak, unless you bid them hear me."

"Ah!" sneered the vindictive Tom Harper, "you were very defiant at one time. Where, then, are the gallant hundred and fifty who were to deliver you?"

"They have failed me," was the reply. "The damned—the double damned miserable traitors!"

Tom's manner suddenly changed, at these words, from cool contempt to fearful rage.

"And do you, accursed viper," he hissed from his shut teeth, "do you dare accuse other men as traitors, you, who are the very basest of the fraternity? A traitor, with whom Judas Iscariot would blush to own fellowship? For Judas at least had thirty pieces of silver as the price of his treachery, but you did not receive even this paltry compensation. Your only reward was the fiendish pleasure you experienced in destroying the happiness of another. In betraying your friend, you merely followed out the grovelling instincts of your ignoble nature. Wretched worm! The infinite inferiority and feebleness of your intellect constitute the only difference between you and the serpent who crept into the garden of Eden to destroy the bliss he found there."

"Tom," answered the other, "I swear to you solemnly, you are mistaken in this matter. I was ever your friend."

"Lying hound!" was the furious response, "I am tempted to rob the gallows of its due."

And as Harper said this, his bright knife gleamed close to the prisoner's heart. The latter closed his eyes, and the pallor of death overspread his countenance, as he sprang back and uttered a shriek so fearful it made me shudder.

"But no," resumed the tormenter, sheathing his blade, "I will not be so merciful as to end your miserable existence thus suddenly. Ponder well on the bitterness of the wretched fate which awaits you. Think how hopeless is your condition—how completely you are in my power.

"Judas," he continued after a pause, "had the grace to repent of his treachery and hang himself; but you, craven coward, are frightened beyond measure at the prospect of death—and in this consists the perfection of my revenge."

Tom glared gloating on the cowering reptile before him. I was shocked that the noble Tom Harper should thus give himself up entirely to the control of evil passions, but I was convinced that he must have some strong reason for it.

"To the oaks!" he at length exclaimed.

The prisoner's arms were grasped, and we all started forward. But few steps had been taken, when some, who had hitherto worn pine twigs, suddenly threw them aside and uttered a peculiar cry. Instantly there was a wild rush toward the spot where the prisoner stood.

! "Treachery, by hell!" shouted Harper, as he drew a pistol and discharged it full in the face of the foremost assailant.

"Woe to the traitors!" he continued, as he again fired, and his adherents gathered thick around him.

Then followed a scene such as I never wish to witness again. Shouts of rage and defiance mingled with yells of pain and terror. The sharp crack of rifles, and the stunning reports of pistols rendered the din deafening, while the deadly gleaming of the silent bowie knives added horror to all. As for me, though almost maddened by the noise of the conflict, I managed to confine myself to the task of watching over my friend, warding off blows and turning aside pistols aimed at him. While thus engaged, a ball passed through my hat and a knife grazed my arm, but I knew nothing of it, till all was over.

It was *soon* over. Those who had proved wolves in sheep's clothing were few, and even when joined to those wearing oak badges, were in the minority. They were quickly vanquished, and fled precipitately.

Not one of the guard, selected with great care by Harper, had turned traitors.

There were corpses on the ground, and wounded men. A number were detailed to attend to them, and the procession moved on.

We soon came to a grove of live oaks, in one part of which stood three trees of such gigantic size, as threw the rest of their companions completely in the

shade. Under one of these had been erected a rough and strong platform, with steps leading to the top. Up these steps Hardaway was hurried, attended by the guard and Tom Harper.

"Mr. Hardaway," said Gaunt, standing straight before him as he spoke, "I don't want you to go away without knowing I helped to prepare this pill for you."

"I know it well, Stuart," was the reply, "but you, at least, ought to have some mercy, and Tom will listen to you, if you plead for me. I never harmed *you*."

"Never?"

"No."

"Never harmed Stuart? Well, I admit it, but you *have* harmed Bill Gaunt."

Hardaway looked steadily in the face of his interlocutor a moment, and as he finally seemed to recognize his face, he bowed his head and groaned.

"I could a killed you, coward," resumed Gaunt, "and would a done it, but that wouldn't a been no sort o' revenge. The colonel here, and I, know how to do these things. You know what you done to me. That's all I've got to say."

The laconic Gaunt fell back, and Tom, with his old look of cruel derision, spoke:

"Well, Hardaway, my tried friend, I expect to return to L——, so soon as this little affair is over, and your friends and relations will be inquiring after you—your lady acquaintances especially, my boy,"

and here a sneer, which seemed almost spasmodic, passed across the speaker's face. "The ladies, Jim, will be making special inquiries concerning you. What shall I say to them?"

"Great God!" groaned the unhappy man,, "is there no way of escaping this fearful doom? It is dreadful! To die on the gallows, amid the hisses and hootings of a mob of vermin such as these."

"Vermin, eh? What a fastidious young man he is! To be sure, you have a right to be so."

Again Tom's lip absolutely writhed with a sneer.

"I can tell your friends," continued the merciless man, "that when I last saw you, yours was a very exalted position, and still you are not satisfied. How very unreasonable you are!"

And Tom actually laughed.

"Have you, then, *no* mercy?" once more said the prisoner. "Will nothing move you? I conjure you, by the memory of our former friendship——"

"Base dog!" interrupted Harper, while the expression of mocking passed off his face, and one dark and malignant again came over it. "Could I *forget* our former friendship, it would be well for you. Had you injured me as an open enemy, or even an indifferent acquaintance, I might be brought to forgive you; but you chose the garb of friendship, under which to stab me.

"Mark me, James Hardaway," and the voice subsided into a low and measured, but fearfully distinct

utterance: "so long as the memory of your treachery rankles in this bosom, so long will it be impossible for me to feel one sentiment of pity. As soon could I be brought to relent, after my foot had been uplifted to crush the serpent which had stung me in the path. Sooner could I forgive the cur which had attempted to worry me, merely because he crouched at my feet, afterward.

"Groveling idiot! I will kill thy body and send thy soul, covered with guilt, to its last punishment. And oh! if there is *one* part of the lake burning with fire and brimstone hotter than the rest—if there is one spot in it better calculated for the torture of a damned spirit than another, may your frightened soul find it. Die, dastard! Die the felon and craven that you are!"

Harper ceased, and motioned to the guard. They seized Hardaway and bound him, amid frightful howls. The noose was fixed, the trap-door dropped, and the unfortunate man's lifeless body swung from a bough of the old oak, "with the gray moss waving silently" over it.

Chapter Twenty-first.

TELLING Fitzwarren I would soon rejoin him at the hotel, I took Tom Harper's arm and led him from the scene. We wandered on through the grove, till we were out of sight and hearing of the crowd, and then we sat down on the fallen trunk of a tree. After a short pause, my friend spoke as follows :

"I will satisfy your curiosity, Jack, in as brief a manner as is possible. Several years ago, I formed the acquaintance of Fannie Stanley. You have seen her, and I need not describe her personal appearance. This she was, however: the embodiment of an ideal I had formed in my youth—I am wrong—but she was very near to this. She had, I thought, a spirit congenial with my own, and this is why I loved her.

"You know nothing of what I am telling you, Jack, because you were at college. What I am going to relate to you, happened when you were not at home. Had you been within reach, you would have been informed. I never intrust secrets to let-
ters.

"I told Fannie of my love, and she gave me leave to hope. For a long while I was happy in this hope.

"I never received any of those distinct avowals of love which some men consider the evidence of its existence. I did not wish for such, and it would have been unnatural for her to give them. I loved her as

she was. Such proof of affection as it was in her nature to give, I received. I was convinced that she loved me. I am still sure of it. While I!—I counted my life as nothing in her cause.

“Such love is, I know, now out of fashion, and I would not be guilty of the folly of making such professions as these to persons who are not capable of believing them; but you, Jack, have known my most secret thoughts, as well as you know your own, and you know I speak truth. It would be useless for me to affect sentiments I do not feel, while talking with you.

“About this time I was thrown a good deal in the company of Jim Hardaway. I considered him a commonplace, *mediocre* kind of fellow, but good-hearted and honorable. You know he was a sort of universal favorite with young and old, high and low, moral and dissipated. Afterward, however, he was discovered to be an arrant hypocrite, and sank very low in public estimation.

“He was the only human being who ever *totally* deceived me with regard to his character. I thought I could read human nature; but this man was, in almost every respect, precisely the opposite of what I had conceived him to be. I considered him a tame, every-day sort of fellow, and rather dull withal. He proved to be a very uncommon personage, and, though far from intellectual, very shrewd and cunning. I deemed him capable of friendship—the sequel will show that he was more incapable of it than the beast which roams the field.

"I invited him to my house, and he came. By this time, Fannie and I were formally engaged to be married. I liked Hardaway better and better, every time he came to see me. One day, when my evil genius had the ascendancy, I confided to this man my tale of love. He listened with apparent delight, congratulated me with all the warmth of friendship, and volunteered to be my special advocate—he was distantly related to Miss Stanley.

"The very next time I saw Fannie after this interview with my good friend, I thought I could discover a change in her manner. Then I reasoned myself out of this foolish imagination, as I chose to consider it; but I saw her again, and this time I knew I could not be mistaken. I would not be rash, however, and attributed her conduct to some coquettish whim which had come over her. She was as free from such things as it is possible for a woman to be, Jack; but, believe me, there are none of them *entirely* free—no, not one.

"I had grown very fond of Jim Hardaway's company. Indeed, he supplied the place which you once filled. How *could* I be so deceived? But so it was. Soon he began to avoid me. Fannie grew still colder. Coupling these circumstances with the fact of the relationship existing between the two, is it surprising that a suspicion should cross my mind that my 'advocate' had been doing me an injury?

"At first, I dismissed it as utterly improbable. I had not yet sounded the baseness of the man's char-

acter. Soon, however, there was a total rupture of the engagement between Miss Stanley and myself, and, not long after, I had proof positive that Hardaway had proved a traitor.

"As soon as I was satisfied on this point, I thought only of revenge. 'Life's dearest joy' had been 'dashed from my lips,' and I was determined, should my life be spared long enough, to render full quit-tance to the agent by whom this had been effected. What this revenge should be, as yet I knew not ; but I was determined to devote the remainder of my existence, if need be, to the task of inventing something which should satisfy the demon which had been roused within me.

"Gaunt knows everything. He knew when I was wronged by Jim Hardaway, and he came to me. He said that he, too, had been injured and insulted by this smooth villain—the details you can get from him—and he wanted to join me in some plan of revenge. A quick death, he said, was much too good for such a scoundrel. I accepted his offer gladly, knowing he would prove a most efficient coadjutor.

"Hardaway left L——, and Gaunt and I tracked him up, following him to this place. Here he entered on a course of dissipation much more reckless than he had pursued at home.

"At the same time, the delectable youth sought popularity. You know his organ of approbateness was very largely developed, and, besides, he was ambitious of going to the legislature.

"As soon as I perceived what he would be at, I laid out to checkmate him. I endeavored to acquire popularity, so that, whenever an opportunity should occur, I could strike him a blow with impunity to myself.

"Not that *I feared* anything which human hands could inflict, but my revenge would have been incomplete if, in obtaining it, I had brought calamity on my own head."

"With Gaunt's help, I succeeded in gaining an ascendancy over the minds of the people here which astonishes me even now.

"Hardaway had contrived to acquire considerable influence with some people, especially the vicious; and he could gather around him a band of desperadoes at any time, who were entirely under his control; but I had at my service a majority of the whole county, among whom were men equally as determined—I may say as reckless, as his lawless companions.

"Up to this time, even, I had formed no very well-defined plan of revenge, only I was resolved to cross his path continually—to confront him on all occasions, and to thwart him in all his plans of petty ambition. I succeeded admirably.

"At length I began to perceive that the day of reckoning was at hand, and how my revenge was to come. Jim Hardaway would go any length to gratify the licentious passions which he possessed.

"Not far from this place, there reside an aged

couple, and their beautiful grand-daughter. This girl, ever since my sojourn here, has been the pride and belle of the country for miles around. The youths who sought her favor rather worshipped than loved her, and many of them would lay down their lives for Ginny Hart.

"Well, Jim Hardaway saw the girl, and resolved upon her ruin. He visited the cabin—they were poor—where she and her grand-parents resided, and tried every art to gain their good opinion; taking particular care to assist them pecuniarily, whenever they stood in need of such assistance, which was very often.

"As for Ginny herself, she had never before been courted by one who wore such fine clothes, and had so much money, so she felt flattered at the man's attentions. Perfectly innocent, pure and truthful herself, she had no suspicion of Hardaway's real object in seeking their cabin so often. She, poor girl, believed him, when he declared he wished to marry her. He had little difficulty in winning her affections.

"This, of itself, was sufficient to excite the jealousy and hatred of her numerous rejected suitors, against the man who had supplanted them. They were naturally more indignant than they would have been if one of their own set had won this wild flower. Besides, many of them suspected that Hardaway was 'after no good,' as they expressed it.

"When the scoundrel imagined he had the girl

completely under his influence, he ventured to make his villanous advances. She received Hardaway's propositions with tears and reproaches. He pretended to repent, begged forgiveness, protested his ardent love, was pardoned, and again received into the affection of the simple, trusting girl. He soon renewed his vile attempts, was repelled and forbidden ever again to enter the house. The scoundrel then swore he would have a most devilish revenge, and with the aid of some of his infamous companions, he accomplished it. One morning the poor girl was found roving in the fields a raving maniac.

"I was soon informed of the circumstances, and, having collected a number of men on whom I could rely, some of them being Hardaway's former rivals, proceeded in search of him. We had not far to go, for he did not pretend to conceal himself.

"I could hardly restrain some of my men from butchering him on the spot. You have seen that this was not my policy. We managed, after a considerable fight, to take our prisoner alive.

"Sending out runners, I soon collected together the people for some miles around, and we brought Hardaway up for trial. His own admissions, before and subsequently to the fact, were all that was needed for his conviction.—When he saw the turn affairs were taking, he was fain to shuffle and prevaricate, but it was too late.

"The poor crazy girl was introduced into our court, where her appearance excited the assembly

into a pitch of frenzy almost beyond my control. By showing them that a speedy death would be too merciful, I succeeded in calming them. Hardaway was found guilty, and it was decided that his punishment should be death—by hanging.

It was left to me to say when the sentence should be executed, and I appointed the day several weeks from the time of the trial, in order to allow him opportunity to reflect on the pleasantness of his position.

“He was foolish enough to indulge in the hope of a rescue. You saw how completely he was unmanned when this hope failed.

“You also saw the corpse of the dastardly traitor, swinging in the breeze, and the crow and the buzzard hovering over it.

“I have been avenged of mine adversary, and I feel calm and satisfied.”

Tom ceased, and whether I thought he had pushed the spirit of revenge too far, or not, I felt that his provocation had been great, and, at least, that it was not the part of a friend to disturb the placid quietude which had come over his troubled spirit.

“And what,” I asked, “will you do now?—Remain here?”

“No,” was the reply. “True, I have found a degree of manhood, truth, and honor—chivalry if you please—among my rough associates, greater than you would imagine. I always find these things among such people. There are some here to whom

I have become attached and whom I regret leaving ; but my mind was made up long since—that, whenever my revenge should be complete, I would go back to the old neighborhood and the old homestead, to spend the balance of my days in peace among the graves of my forefathers.”

“ When I go back to Georgia, then,” said I, “ you will be there ?”

“ Yes.”

“ When do you start home ?”

“ To-morrow.”

We went back to the tavern, and next day separated, Tom going back to Georgia, Fitzwarren and I continuing our wanderings in Florida.

Chapter Twenty-second.

“ FITZ,” said I, one day, when we were pretty well satisfied with travelling through the peninsula, and were thinking of turning our faces northward, “ I cannot get my consent to leave Florida without seeing Helen Bently again.”

For a moment there was no reply, and I looked up. My friend’s face wore an expression of pain, and as I caught his eye, he put his hand to his jaw.

“ Does that tooth trouble you again ?” I asked.

“ A little,” was the reply, in a deep but gentle tone. “ However, I can bear it without swearing, as I did before. The pain is almost gone now.”

"Have the blamed fang pulled out."

"I will, if it annoys me much more."

"But," resumed I, "will you go to Bentwold with me?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I have no business there."

"Do you go only where business calls?"

"Then I can have no pleasure there."

"Well, we must part, then, for the present."

"Yes."

"Fitz, if you will stop somewhere—at Tallahassee again, for instance—I will rejoin you."

"I can't stop, Jack. I must go straight to Virginia."

"Why, I thought you were to spend some time with me at Hopeton?"

"I know I promised to do so, and if you insist, I will redeem the promise yet; but you will excuse me, when I tell you that late developments render me exceedingly restless, and anxious to go back."

"Tell me your excuse," said I, "and perhaps I may relieve you of your obligation."

"My excuse, Sir Jack, is my own business."

"Well, if it *must* be so. But when shall I see you again?"

"I don't know."

"And I don't care."

"Good-by, then, Jack."

"Farewell, my friend."

And in this way we parted. And so generally

parted. To judge from our conversation, at times, one would say there was precious little friendship between Fitzwarren and myself. He was almost always cold and reserved in his manner. Ours, indeed, was a singular intimacy. Sometimes Fitzwarren would show some semblance of warmth of feeling. I saw this, however, that though generally reserved with me, with others he was actually repellant; and he sought my company, while he avoided most people. From these circumstances, I was convinced that he felt a sentiment of esteem for me.

We had never exchanged letters. I had never proposed anything of the sort, because I had frequently heard him express his aversion to writing. Sometimes, when we parted, there would be a time and a place fixed to meet again, but generally, as in the instance above recorded, the next meeting was left to chance or whim.

A few more days elapsed, and I was in the grounds at Bentwold, driving slowly along through that unsurpassed grove. I leaned out and looked all around and before me. At considerable distance ahead I saw, walking along a meandering path, which just ran close to the carriage-road, a lady. It was impossible to mistake that form and that queenly gait. I approached more rapidly, and got out to pay my respects to Helen Bently, who was enjoying a ramble, in company with her little brother.

As I alighted and made my way toward her, she turned suddenly, and as she recognized me, a sur-

prised expression stole over her face. That, however, was not all I wished, and I looked intently to see if I could trace aught of pleasure. A faint blush suffused her beautiful features, and vain fellow that I was, I imagined I could detect evidence of a nature flattering to my hopes.

"You see," said I, as I stood by her side, and offered my hand, "I could not stay away."

"Yes, I see, Mr. Hopeton, and I am surprised. I thought that travel and adventure possessed more charms for you than this tame, secluded spot."

Walter and I shook hands like good friends, and then he, clever, sensible little fellow, exclaimed :

"Sis, Mr. Hopeton can go with you to the house now. I want to run by the pond."

And away he darted, followed by his dogs. I blessed the boy, from my very heart.

"You are surprised, Miss Helen," said I, "but not displeased, I trust."

"Certainly not," was the reply.

"You know," continued I, "that 'tis home where'er the heart is."

"I have heard it said so."

"Then you can account for my quick return."

Helen looked at me, as if again somewhat surprised, and meeting an earnest gaze, dropped her eyes, and was silent.

"You will think me," I resumed, "an impetuous, artless, foolish boy, but——"

I stopped again, and once more essayed to read

my fair companion's thoughts. We were strolling slowly along toward the house. It was a delicious afternoon. A light breeze occasionally rose, and wantoned idly with the stray ringlet which fell over that cheek of matchless beauty. A deeper color than ordinary rested on that cheek, and I fancied I could see a little tremor in her manner. But I was under the influence of a spell, which it was impossible to resist.

Still, I was growing rather embarrassed. I had persuaded myself—how, I know not—that Helen Bently regarded me with rather more than ordinary kindness—in fact, that she might be brought to love me. The dream was pleasing—intoxicating—and now I dreaded to test the matter farther, lest I should utterly destroy it. But Miss Bently could see no reason for such silence.

“Mr. Hopeton,” said she, “you have been travelling all over our State, and no doubt you can entertain us with a variety of incidents.”

“I have witnessed some thrilling scenes,” answered I, recollecting the events of the day passed at M——, “but I am thinking of far different topics now. Wherever I’ve been, ‘my heart, untravelled, fondly turned to thee.’ I *must* speak, Miss Bently, unless you absolutely forbid. However rash and simple you may consider me, I must tell you how I love you. You may believe that love at first sight is imagination. Nevertheless, I loved from the very moment I saw you. I felt, when my eyes first rested on your

countenance, when they first encountered the light of yours, that you were to be the arbitress of my destiny—that you would have the power to render me happy or miserable.”

Helen continually blushed and averted her eyes. She actually trembled. I mustered courage to take her hand.

“Miss Helen,” said I, “you steadily turn your look from me. I cannot think it is anger which induces you to do so. Oh!” I continued, “if you could only sound the depths of my love! Could you know how it forms a part of my being, and, if it be disappointed, that life will be robbed of its best portion! Could you look into my heart and see your image deeply impressed there—could you read my thoughts, and know that you are ever present in them, you would be forced to think kindly of one so devoted to you. Say, shall I, *dare* I hope that I have inspired *you* with anything of the love which has so completely overpowered *me*?”

“How strangely would you think of me,” answered Helen, as she allowed me to retain her trembling hand, “How strangely would you think of a maiden who would admit that she loved one whom she has known only for a few months, and of whose very existence, previous to that time she was unaware!”

“‘We live in feelings; not in figures on a dial,’” I answered. “‘We should count time by heart-throbs.’ By that reckoning, I have known you long and well.”

"Do you know," said I, after another pause, "that you torture me by your silence? This suspense is cruel. Will you not look on me and give me some token, something on which to found a hope?"

She looked at me and I read love in her eyes. One moment I drank in their expression, and then once more she averted them; but as she did so, she faintly murmured:

"By *that* reckoning I am willing you should estimate, my——" her voice almost ceased, but, "love" was whispered softly, yet so distinctly as not to be mistaken by an ear sharpened by its influence.

Chapter Twenty-third.

I WENT home, after a short but delightful time spent at Bentwold. Perhaps some of my readers would like to have accounts of more love scenes. Alas! I am not good at such descriptions, and though they might please a few, they would probably disgust the majority, so I will not even try.

For the first time in all my life, Hopeton, after a few days, seemed dull to me. I was continually thinking of Helen Bently, and congratulating myself on the possession of her love. I had obtained permission to write, however, and this was some relief. I used to sit down and scribble sheet after sheet full of

the outpouring of love, and in answer to these came precious epistles, which I enclosed in one large envelope, and endorsed on it, "The apple of mine eye."

But these were not all the tokens I received. One day I had pleaded for and obtained a raven ringlet, which I wore with her daguerreotype—the faithful likeness of her lovely features—next my heart, of course.

And let me see—what else did I do? Oh! I used to carve "Helen Bently" on the bark of trees, taking very good care, though, to cut them out as soon as carved, that no one might find out my secret. Of course, too, I used to write the dear name in the sand. Besides, no night passed that I did not dream of Helen. In short, I had all the symptoms regularly. You know them, reader, so it is useless to enumerate further.

Finally, I concluded to pay Tom Harper a visit and see whether he was leading a happy life. With my gun and dogs, and Howard, I set out, and late in the day came in sight of my friend's comfortable bachelor quarters. Just as I went in the front door, Tom came in the back way, in shooting-jacket and a well-filled game bag. My object was to watch him narrowly and see if I could discover any trace of remorse. Scrutinize as closely as I would, however, I could see nothing in his fine, open, manly countenance, save the same rollicking gayety which attracted me toward him when we first met on the western frontier.

If any evidence had been wanting, the jovial voice in which he saluted me would have supplied it.

"Jack Hopeton, as I live!" he exclaimed, grasping my hand in his hearty way. "So you have been able to escape long enough from the siren to see Georgia once more?"

"What can you mean, Tom?" said I, knowing pretty well at the same time, but wondering how he had made his discovery, for I had told him nothing of it in Florida, knowing he was too much absorbed to feel much interest in a tale of love.

"Ah, you rogue," he replied, "you're a sly one, but I tracked you up."

"But seriously, though, Tom, enlighten me. Of course I have no secrets from you, and will tell you everything; but first, I am curious to see if you know anything concerning my adventures."

"Well, here's the way of it then. Coming home from Florida, I passed through D——, and there, while smoking a cigar in the veranda of the hotel, I heard a knot of young men, conversing about a certain Miss Bently, who, according to their account, is a perfect paragon; and one of them remarked that a Jack Hopeton, from Georgia, was said to be smitten in that quarter. Nor is that all, Jack, for another one said that he had seen Hopeton, and he was a gallant-looking fellow—just the very man, he thought, to captivate Helen Bently."

"Spare me, Tom," I said, blushing with pleasure, in spite of myself—I was *young*, reader—"I must

plead guilty to the smiting, but as for the rest, time will show whether that kind young man was right or wrong."

"But come," said Tom, "I am keeping you standing here in this cold hall. Come in to the fire."

He led me into his snugery—sitting-room and library combined—and seated me in a luxurious arm chair, while he went out to get rid of his hunting suit and muddy boots. He soon returned.

"Take a seat, Tom," said I, as he entered, "and let me tell you all about it. First of all, though, let me show you my excuse for falling in love."

Tom sat down in a chair like the one I was occupying, and I drew forth the daguerreotype, which I constantly wore next to my—in the breast pocket of my coat. Opening it, as he leaned forward, I showed him the picture.

"There," said I, "anchorite, look at that and say if I am to be blamed for falling in love at first sight."

"'Fore God, Jack!" exclaimed my companion, as he took the case from my hands and gazed admiringly on the features portrayed. "This *is* an excuse, old fellow, provided it is not a fancy sketch, which I very strongly suspect it is."

"No fancy about it, Tom. It is a daguerreotype taken from a living original, whose hand I pressed a short time ago, and who allows me to think that she loves me."

"Then, sir," was the reply, "I only wonder you didn't go quite crazy."

"But this picture, Tom," said I, "does not render justice to the original. You cannot see in this, nor could you see in any daguerreotype, the dancing light, the varying expression of the eye."

"That is very true," said Tom, gravely.

"Now listen to my tale," said I. And I related to him all that the reader knows concerning my love.

"There is one thing that may trouble you, though," said Tom, as I finished.

"What is that?"

"You know your excellent mother thinks that Kate Morgan is the very girl for you."

"Yes, but Helen Bently's mother is a dear friend of my mother, and nothing would afford the latter more pleasure than seeing me wooing and winning the maiden we are speaking of."

"Then," answered Tom, "farewell to my bachelorhood. I'll court Miss Kate myself."

I could not help thinking of the tale which Tom had told me in the live oak grove, nor could I avoid looking intently and searchingly at him. He caught my eye and returned my gaze steadily.

"I know what is on your mind, Jack," said he in a firm, cheerful tone. "You are thinking of the scene at the Three Oaks, and of what I told you afterward. I do not contemplate these things or speak of them in a spirit of levity, but I recollect them without the least feeling of remorse. Under the same circumstances I would pursue exactly the same course. The remembrance of them does not make me unhappy."

"I am glad to hear it, Tom," said I, heartily. "But seriously, I wish you would conclude to marry."

"Seriously, then, Jack, if Kate Morgan will consent to intrust her happiness into my keeping, I *will* marry. You rascal, you," continued Tom, "I would have made love to her before, but for the fact that I thought it would be interfering with you."

"I wish to heaven, then, I had known it," was my reply. "I could have told you of your mistake."

"Doubtless," said Tom, "but I was so sure of your predilection, I made no serious inquiries. However, I'll make up for lost time, now."

"When will you go to see her?"

"Where can I see her?"

"At her father's house."

"Oh! the mischief! Won't she be at Catoosa?"

"Perhaps; but can you wait so long?"

"Let me see. It is now toward the last of March April, May, June. The watering-place season will commence by the middle of July. Three months and a half. Well, that *is* a long time. I don't know—I may wait, or may not."

"And while you are *waiting*, Tom," suggested I, "some one else may step in and bear off the prize."

"That is true, Jack. Well, I'll dream on it to-night."

And I suppose Tom did dream. I know I did. I remained with him only a few days. The night be-

fore I left him, I inquired where he would go in July.

"When I said something to you about Catoosa, the other day," he replied, "I entirely forgot that I had almost forsworn fashionable company. But here it is. If I don't see Kate Morgan between now and the time you mention, I'll go to Catoosa. Perhaps I may see her, or somebody like her."

"Then I'll meet you there," said I. "It is likely my adored will be there too."

"What, Jack! Don't you expect to see her before then?"

"I don't know."

"You are a very quiet lover, then, my boy."

"Why, you are hesitating whether to see Miss Kate before then."

"True enough, but she has never told me she loved me. My case is very different from yours. Were I as sure of a welcome as you, a band of Camanches could not keep me back."

"By the way, Tom," said I, "you must hold yourself in readiness to stand as one of my friends, when the trying time comes."

"You allude to your marriage, Jack, of course," said Tom, as his eye grew serious, and his voice changed to a sadder tone.

"Of course," said I.

"Don't you recollect, Jack, what I said to you about women, on the prairies?"

"Yes."

"Let me entreat you, then, my dear friend, not to be too sanguine. I do not say this to mar your present happiness. You are convinced of this?"

"Certainly."

"But I wish you, Jack, to remember a homely adage: 'There is many a slip betwixt the cup and lip.' I am anxious to guard you against future disappointment."

"I take it all kindly, Tom," answered I. "If my love should see fit to prove capricious, I will find refuge in this theory. It may be yours, or it may be mine. I don't recollect. I have fallen in love with a certain character. The character with whom I am in love, would never deceive me. If Helen Bently deceives me, she is not the character whom I loved. Therefore, in that event, I never loved Helen Bently."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Tom. "You are philosopher enough to bear a jilt, and I am glad to find it so."

I left Tom undetermined whether to go immediately on a courting expedition, or wait and risk a season at "The Springs." When I got home, though, I was more restless than ever, and I unburdened my heart to my parents. They had noticed some of my symptoms, and had been amusing themselves vastly at my expense, when I was perfectly unconscious of their suspicions. My mother, though, was well pleased when she heard who was Helen's mother.

"Provided she resembles her parent in appearance

"and character, Jack," said she, "I am not surprised that you fell a captive so easily."

"Ah! mother," was my answer, "I have praised her so much that I am ashamed to hear myself repeat the same thing so often; but Mrs. Bently never could have been the being that Helen is."

"'Being,' 'being,' Ha! ha! ha! Well, Jack," said my father, "you are far gone. When a young gentleman calls a girl a 'being,' his case is hopeless."

"Perhaps it is," said I, a little confused by the laugh in which my mother joined heartily against me; "but the time has been when you no doubt thought my mother here a *being*."

"Certainly; and a half dozen more before her."

"That is complimentary to me, at least," said Mrs. Hopeton.

"But go ahead, Jack," said my father. "Recollect this, though; if you marry the first girl you court, you'll be devilish lucky."

A few days after this conversation, I set out for Bentwold again. A happy time I had, too. To tell the truth, I began to think it allowable to talk of appointing a time for the marriage, and I hinted as much one day; but Helen, with a mischievous look, said there was no use in hastening matters, since she was quite young, and I was not *very* old. "Time enough to go on yet," was her observation.

It was in vain that I pleaded, as we strolled among the orange trees, and Helen hung on my arm, with love looking out of her glorious eyes.

"I have admitted that I love you," said she ; and I read sincerity in her face. "I admit it still. It would be folly to deny it ; but indeed I am too young to marry yet."

I need not record more of the conversation. I again left Bentwold, more in love than ever, and prouder yet of the feeling with which I had inspired the belle of Florida.

Chapter Twenty-fourth.

THE Bentlys were to be at Catoosa, and thither I went. The omnibus took us—there were a dozen passengers bound for the same place—at the depot, and rattled away cheerily through a broken country, along by old Indian orchards and pine-log houses. Up and down hill, we bowled along—across a pretty deep creek—at length a little branch—then a sudden turn to the right, and we were in full front view of the hotel, which stands on the top of quite an eminence. Up the long ascent we drove, amid the clang of brass-band music, and drawing up before the principal entrance, got out, dusty, weary, and travel-soiled, under the concentrated gaze of hundreds of eyes, belonging to well-dressed, fresh-looking persons collected in the colonnade.

"And so you've come, Jack," called out a cheery voice, as I ascended the steps.

I looked up and saw Tom Harper.

"Certainly," was my reply. "But, by Jove! Tom, I am glad to see *you* here."

"And a little surprised, too, I expect," said Tom, as he took my arm and we strolled a short distance from the throng.

"Let's promenade a little, till the baggage wagon comes."

"At least, let me go and register my name, though," said I, "that I may stand some chance to get a room."

"Never mind that; you can't get a single room. They're all occupied, but I've reserved a bed for you in mine."

"I am under eternal obligations," answered I.

"You may consider yourself so, for it has been all I could do to hold out. When I first came, I saw how crowded it was going to be, so I took a room with two beds, and prepared to stand a regular siege for your sake. For a few days I was allowed to retain peaceable possession, but then the gents came pouring in, and they, in conjunction with the hotel keepers, began to make their approaches. However, I defended it manfully, until to-day. I began to waver this morning, when the first omnibus came in, and no Jack Hopeton. If you had failed to come in this last, I should have been compelled to capitulate."

"You forget, though, Tom, that unless my adven is recorded, and my claim put in, they will give the berth that you reserved for me to another."

"Ay, but I've got the key in my pocket."

"Nevertheless, let me register my name."

"Come on, then." And we went into the office and attended to this little matter.

"Tell me, now, Tom," said I, when we had again got away from the throng. "Tell me who is here."

"Well, there is Mrs. Holmes, and—"

"Indeed, and where is Uncle Charley?"

"I don't know. He *ought* to be here, sure enough."

"And will be, you may depend. And who else?"

"Then, there is Miss Morgan."

"Kate?"

"The very same—the matchless Kate. Ah! Jack, you need not compare any one else to her. Juno; Hebe; Venus; The Loves; The Graces——"

"Pshaw! Tom. I'll listen to all that with pleasure, when you have told me who is here."

"Just listen to the man. You who go mad whenever you begin to praise the object of *your* affection——"

"I beg your pardon, Tom; but my fervor is real—earnest, while yours is, I fear, to a great extent, affected."

"Give me leave to assure you, Mr. Jack, that you are mistaken."

"I sincerely hope I am. Nothing would afford me greater pleasure than to see you wooing Kate Morgan. If you are in earnest, say on."

"Never mind ; the fit is off now."

"Then you can finish your list."

"Yes. Then there is Miss Hillsman, from A., and Miss Jekyl, from South Carolina—a great belle—and Miss Johnson, from M., and—let me see. There are the Hepburnes and the——"

"Oh, the devil! Tom," said I, impatiently. "What do I care for all these people?"

"Who *ever* saw such a man? First he asks me who is here, and then he interrupts me, not allowing me to proceed. Then I stop giving the list, and fall to praising Kate Morgan. Then he abuses me as insincere, and tells me to resume my list. At last, 'What do I care for all these people?'"

"Now, Tom, don't be stubborn, but tell me who is here from Florida?"

"Oh, that's it, eh? There are plenty of people here from that State—Mr. and Mrs. Barton—two young ladies named Hood—they are stars, too. Then there is Mr. Butler, and——"

"Grant me patience. Why, Tom, what on earth——"

"Hold on, man! 'What on earth' is the trouble with *you*? Let me finish my—what was I going to say? Oh! there is a Miss Bently, who is said to——"

"That will do, Tom; the list is complete."

"And really, Jack, I am not surprised that you fell in love at first sight. 'If I had only seen her before you did!'"

"What then?"

"Why, I might have fallen in love with her myself,"

"And yet you talk of Kate Morgan."

"Yes. But here comes the baggage wagon. Take the key, and while you are making your toilet, I'll see who's in the parlor."

After bathing and dressing, I sallied forth from my room. The colonnade and the parlor, crowded with a gay, laughing throng when I first came, were now deserted. I rang the bell and sent my card to Miss Bently's room. She was taking a walk. True to her habit at home, after the sun had sunk behind the hills, she must go out into the open air—on a bounding steed when convenient, on foot otherwise.

I started to the billiard-room. That was likely to be deserted also; but as I walked along, I heard my name called, and, turning, I saw Fitzwarren's pale countenance.

"You here, Fitz?" I exclaimed. "You come south, in the summer, instead of going north."

"Yes. My friends—at least my friend," said he, taking my hand in his vice-like grip, and speaking with more warmth than ordinary. "My friend, Jack, lives at the south. Why, then, should I go north?"

"You look a little surprised," he continued, "that I should talk so; but there are times, Jack, when even I feel a yearning after friendship and sympathy. You are the only one to whom I have looked for either, lately."

"You always find what you seek, Fitzwarren," I replied. "Frequently, though—generally, indeed, you seem to avoid, rather than seek, both."

"I know it, Jack," he said, "but forgive me. It is my misfortune, rather than my fault. Circumstances of a fearful nature, operating on a melancholy and sensitive disposition, have made me what I am—a gloomy, repulsive misanthrope—hating and hated.

I made no reply to this, and he went on.

"The events of my early life, if you were acquainted with them, would cause even you to avoid me."

"I don't know, for you have never given me the slightest idea of them; but I think you are mistaken. Whatever you may have done that is wrong, from what I know of you, now, I should conclude you were forced into it by inexorable fate—some cruel necessity, which was a part of your nature."

"How well you have read me, Jack," answered my friend, with a surprised look—"and how favorably! Yes, you put the right construction upon it. There can be no doubt that I was born the child of misfortune. I was brought into the world for one single purpose—to commit a horrible crime, and to be accursed—*miserable*, in this life. As to the next world, concerning which so many fables are related, I am perfectly easy, because I know no greater damnation can await me in that, than rests on me, now."

I was shocked and silent. I disliked to hear such language, but I had long been aware that Fitzwarren was a free-thinker, and now I was almost ready to believe he was a monomaniac. At any rate, I was fully convinced it would be folly to attempt to argue or reason with him, so I said nothing.

"Does my heterodoxy shock you, Jack," he now asked, with a sickly smile, relapsing into his usual coldness and indifference of manner.

"Almost."

"Ah!"

"Yes; but, independently of that, and seriously, I am, heart and soul, opposed to tabooing a man on account of his opinions. It has got to be too much the custom in this *free* country of ours to persecute people on account of their peculiar belief in matters of religion."

"You are right, Jack. I don't care a fig for the opinions the world entertains of me; but I know this, that a great many of the so-called 'Christians' are totally and hopelessly devoid of the thing which their Bible says lies at the very foundation of their religion—charity. Ah! the smooth-faced hypocrites! I only wish I had the power which they arrogate to themselves—but which they do not possess, the blasphemers!—I would soon consign them all to the hell they are so busy trying to prepare for me."

"It would be useless to trouble yourself about it, Fitz," answered I, "the kind of 'people' you describe will be sure to go there anyway."

"We agree on that point, Jack. We differ, though, as to the number of this kind of 'Christians' which exists in the world."

"Let's waive all this, though," exclaimed Fitzwarren. "You had started to the billiard-room. Come on, and let me beat you."

"Very good, sir," I answered, "but you will not find that altogether so easy a task as you once did."

And we walked on. I was somewhat disappointed, for I thought Fitzwarren had been about to relate something of his past life. He seemed to divine my thoughts.

"Jack," said he, "I have written a sketch of my life for you, which I may deliver into your hands before I die, though I don't expect to do so. After I'm dead, you shall have it, however."

"After you're dead!" answered I. "How many years do you suppose I'll survive you? You are very little older than I am."

"Yes, but there is hereditary consumption in our family."

"You, however, Fitz, must prove an exception. What a broad chest you've got!"

"That amounts to nothing—literally nothing! Even now I have a cough, and if you will notice closely, you'll see I stoop a little."

I looked, and it was even so. He read assent in my eyes.

"Now you are satisfied," he said. "But even if

I had no consumption, men are poisoned sometimes, and there are such things as pistols and daggers."

"Fitzwarren," said I, sadly, for I was much impressed, "what *is* the matter with you?"

"Matter, Jack! Nothing. Come, my friend, you *are* shocked now."

"At least," was my reply, "I sympathize with the very unhappy mood in which you seem to be this evening."

"I have a mission—a new mission—to perform, Jack. My first—and principal one—was to be unhappy. My last one is to serve you."

"I am satisfied," I answered, "that you are willing to aid me in anything."

"Yes, but you don't know how much you need aid. A secret enemy is watching you, and waiting an opportunity to strike you a fell blow. I live but to ward that off, and then I'll pass out. When a man's mission is accomplished, he dies—either by consumption, or poison, or dagger, or some other means."

Fitzwarren was more excited than I had ever seen him, and I began to conclude he was under the influence of ardent spirits. I thought I would get him to my room, and proposed to walk back to the hotel.

"No," said he, "not till we take that game."

"It's growing dark, now," I answered. "It will soon be supper time."

"Oh, we'll have lights. I insist."

I was obliged to yield. We passed by the door of a bar-room.

"Let's go in here," said Fitzwarren, "and you'll see what you have never yet seen."

"Oh, don't go in there."

"I must. You think—I see by your manner—that I am already intoxicated. I have not tasted any form of alcohol to-day. Since I saw you last, though, Jack, I have been drinking it. I've never yet been drunk, however, and never will be. I only take enough to make me firm."

It was true that I had never seen Fitzwarren take a drink of ardent spirits. I walked in with him, and called for some wine and bitters.

"Brandy straight," was his order.

"You'll conclude I am an apt scholar, Jack," he continued, as he poured out a tumbler half full of brandy.

"I conclude that you'll be drunk, if you swallow all that dose," answered I, looking on wonderingly.

"No," answered Fitzwarren, raising the glass to his lips. "It will merely steady my nerves, so that I'll beat you playing billiards."

"Perhaps so."

"But here, Jack; here's to your success in the Bently case," and he drained the tumbler.

We passed on to the billiard-room, and sure enough, in a few moments, Fitzwarren was as cold and calm as usual. I soon became interested in the game, and we played, with alternate success, for

some time. So absorbed did we become, that not till it was very late did we conclude to stop

I happened to look at my watch.

"The deuce!" I exclaimed. "It's past supper-time."

"Oh!" said Fitzwarren, "I am not hungry."

"Of course not; you never are."

"And you, Jack, ought not to be, since you are in love."

"I can't ~~live~~ live on love. But come, let's go."

"I don't want to eat; I'm going to my room."

"Will you be in the ballroom, Fitz?"

"It is likely."

So we separated; I going to the dining-room, and scratching up some sort of a supper, then hastening off to dress for the dance.

The ballroom was a blaze of light as I entered, and there was a host of beautiful ladies and gallant gentlemen. Ah, there is one thing that *must* be conceded to old Georgia: she can boast the prettiest women in the world.

But the music filled the room, and the dancers were keeping time to its passionate pulsations. There were bright eyes which shot their dangerous glances from under long eye-lashes. There were rosy cheeks which might be natural, or might be—paint. There were coral lips which parted to give utterance to the gay jest, or the merry laugh. Cavaliers basked in the sunshine of those eyes, or listened, rapt, to the accents which fell from the rosy lips.

It was a gay scene, but I was looking for one "bright, particular star." I saw her at last. She and her partner happened to be standing still at the moment, and she appeared to be listening attentively. The gentleman's back was turned, and I could not see his countenance, but I judged from his courtly bows, his easy manner, and his seeming fluency, that he was one calculated to please ladies.

I went into the colonnade to take a turn or two, till the cotillon should be over. This was soon the case, and I hurried back. I walked to where Helen had gone to get a seat, and before she saw me, spoke, extending my hand.

"I am glad, Miss Helen," I began, "that you concluded to grace our watering-place with your presence."

She turned quickly, as I spoke, and so did her late partner. A look of complete surprise and pleasure passed over her face.

"How could I resist coming?" she asked, as she gave me her hand.

But it was my turn to be surprised, as I recognized in the man, now my *vis-à-vis*, my old acquaintance—Lorraine. He also immediately knew me, and started, while that look of hatred I had already seen, several times, kindled in his eye. It was but for a moment, however. To my further surprise, he seemed to change his notion, and bowed courteously. I could not be outdone in politeness, and returned his bow.

Helen looked at us in some little wonder, for we both seemed to have forgotten her presence. I, indeed, was so very absent-minded, that I retained her hand all the time this dumb-show was going on between Lorraine and myself. Seeing Lorraine glance curiously at our locked hands, with a slight blush and look of reproach at me, she withdrew hers.

"Really," said she, gayly, "you gentlemen seem to be obvious of the fact that you are in a lady's presence. Since you are so much interested in each other, let me introduce you : Mr. Lorraine, Mr. Hopeton ; Mr. Hopeton, Mr. Lorraine."

"I believe," said I, with a low bow, "I have met Mr. Lorraine, before."

"Not under very favorable auspices, though, Mr. Hopeton," answered Lorraine, with great politeness and cordiality. "Let the acquaintance, which I am so proud of forming, date from this moment."

My only answer to this speech was another bow ; for I was determined to know something more of the man before I cultivated too close an acquaintance with him.

"You two," said Helen, "ought to be great friends, for you both have served my brother, and have in him a very warm common friend."

Not knowing exactly what to say, I was silent, while Lorraine commenced another speech. At this time I happened to look toward the other side of the room, and my eye met a sight which caused me actually to start. Fitzwarren was standing a few paces

from us, with folded arms, and gazing upon some one in our group—I could not determine exactly whom—as an angry tiger gazes at his foe. Never, not even when Tom Harper looked on the face of Jim Hardaway at the Three Oaks, had I seen a glance more full of concentrated hatred and malignity than now. His ordinary *pale* face was now *white* and rigid. His lips stood apart, while his thin nostril, distended, quivered with emotion.

So remarkable was the apparition, that conversation almost ceased, and people in the room gazed in wonder at it.

“What can be the matter with Mr. Fitzwarren?” said Helen, in a frightened voice, as she happened to look that way.

“Great God!” exclaimed Lorraine, as he looked in turn, and caught Fitzwarren’s eye. “Who is that man? I have certainly seen him somewhere.”

I could well believe this, for Lorraine was not the man to betray emotion unless it was overpowering. But I had no time to think of these things, for I wished to rouse Fitzwarren. I stepped toward him, but at my first motion he started suddenly, resumed his usual look and walked hastily out of the room. I immediately turned to Helen. The fluent Lorraine seemed to have been struck dumb, for he could only converse by snatches. Still he did not seem at all disposed to leave us, and I was anxious to get rid of him.

“Miss Helen,” said I, “will you dance the next set with me, or are you engaged?”

"I am not engaged," was the reply, "and will dance with you."

"But unless you vastly prefer dancing," again said I, "a stroll on the colonnade would please me most."

"I believe I have no objection," said Helen.

"Then, as it will not be long before the dance commences, I petition that our promenade commence immediately."

I offered my arm, and we walked out on the colonnade. As we passed out, I turned to look at Lorraine. The deadly, sinister expression with which he had always, heretofore, regarded me, was on his face. I paused a moment to return a look of defiance, when just at this moment Mr. Bently, whom I had not before seen, came up to him.

"Why, hello! old fellow!" he exclaimed familiarly, tapping the scowling gentleman on the shoulder, "what does that thunder-cloud on your brow portend?"

"Ah! Mr. Bently," said the other, as every trace of anger suddenly vanished from his countenance, and he was all smiles and politeness, "good evening. You are still the most gay young man of us all, although you are the head of a family."

"Very likely. Who the devil were you frowning on just now?"

"That is a secret, my dear sir."

"Ah! some rival. I did not think Mr. Lorraine regarded rivals sufficiently to grow angry with them."

We continued to make our way through the crowd.

"Can you tell me anything about the man you introduced me to?" I asked of Helen, when we were alone.

"Not much. He rendered some trifling aid to brother Frank, I don't know what, and he has letters of introduction to some of the best people we know."

"Is that all you can tell?"

"They say he lives in North Carolina, or Virginia, or Louisiana, or Texas—now you have all I know."

"You say he is a great friend of your family?"

"Father and Frank like him very much. Mother is rather indifferent toward him. As for me, I confess I almost hate him, although, for the sake of the others, I try to treat him with great politeness."

"And what possible reason can you have for disliking the gentleman? I thought he was peculiarly prepossessing where he chose to play the agreeable."

"Yes."

"Well, he has been trying this with you?"

"You may consider my candor as vanity, but nevertheless I admit that he has."

While promenading the long colonnade which runs entirely around the hotel, I had managed, God knows how, to get Helen's soft, beautiful hand into mine, and retained it there. I looked at the imperial face and regal eyes beside me, which were now radiant with love.

"But, Helen," I ventured to say, and paused to look for the displeasure I feared must follow. But

her eyes met mine, and they still beamed love. I pressed the soft, warm, pulsating hand I held in mine, and continued,

"But, Helen, the question still recurs. Why do you almost hate Mr. Lorraine?"

"I am almost ashamed to tell you," she answered, as a slight blush suffused her features, though the mild light of love still shed its rays from her glorious eyes.

"But you will tell, though, my adored?" said I.

"Well, then," was the reply, while she clung close to my side, "It was merely because I one day heard him make a remark slightly disparaging to you.

Reader, I "seemed to walk on thrones." The full consciousness that I reigned in her heart, was to me a thought far more exulting than could have filled the breast of the mighty Napoleon, even had he seen his scheme of universal conquest accomplished. I don't know what I said or did, but after a while my thoughts turned in another channel.

"What did the gentleman see fit to say about me?" I asked.

"Nothing," answered Helen, "for which you can call him to account, or I should never have told you of it. Really I cannot recall the words. They were merely some common, trite, harmless sarcasm—nothing reflecting on your character at all. I only remember the impression they made on me; I remember, also," she continued, "that I replied to his sarcasm—which, I am afraid, was imprudent."

"No," I answered, "but it was very kind.—You make me *too* happy, Helen; I am afraid such bliss *cannot* last."

"Well, Mr. Lorraine looked very keenly and in much surprise at me, when I answered him. Since then he has always spoken well of you."

"Did he say he was acquainted with me?"

"He had met you, but never had an introduction."

I thought it useless to tell Helen anything concerning my meetings with Lorraine. For the remainder of our promenade I gave myself up to the delicious intoxication of love, and that night I sought my pillow the happiest man at Catoosa.

Chapter Twenty-fifth.

"HOW do you do, Mr. Bently?" said I next morning at the breakfast table. "I am happy to see you enjoying the pleasures of the season with as much gusto as we youngsters. I saw you last night in the ball-room."

"Thank you, Mr. Hopeton," was the civil reply. "My excellent health enables me to enjoy life very much. I hope you are well."

"Very well, thank you."

"But you had the advantage of me last night, if you saw me in the ball-room. I did not see you."

Helen was by her father's side. I omitted to state that I had bowed with a "Good morning, Miss Helen," to her, when I first took my seat at the table. I glanced at her as her father spoke, and saw an expression of some confusion cross her face. There was no one near us three. I had never told Mr. Bently I loved his daughter, but I thought he must know it, and I concluded now would be an auspicious moment to give him a hint. My mind misgave me a little, too, for Mr. Bently's manner, though perfectly polite, was certainly very grave and reserved—entirely different from his ordinary gay, cordial bearing toward me. Nevertheless I spoke.

"No sir. I was not in the ball-room much. I did not dance at all."

"Strange, for a ladies' man like you. Why?"

"I did not get to the room till the ball was half over, and then a very bewitching young lady allowed me the extreme honor and pleasure of promenading with her half an hour in the colonnade."

"Indeed! That was pleasant."

"It was, sir—so pleasant that when the promenade was over, and I had led her back into the ball-room, unwilling to mar the happiness I had enjoyed by converse with any one else, I sought my couch."

"Or the *tiger*—which?" asked a gay voice behind me.

I turned and beheld Frank Bently, with his fine-looking mother on his arm. I had made no point

with Mr. Bently, as I intended, for it was evident that he did not miss his daughter from the ball-room the night before, and he was not aware that it was she to whom I was alluding. However, the greeting from Frank and Mrs. Bently was cordial as ever, and when they sat down I thought it was as pleasant a little breakfast party as I ever was in.

So gayly did Frank rattle on concerning belles and billiards, love and betting; so merrily did his mother chime in, though occasionally reproving him for his wildness; and so full of spirits did Helen seem, that Mr. Bently caught the infection, and so far lost his unwonted reserve, that, before the breakfast was over, I had forgotten it.

"But I insist on knowing," said Frank at last, "who it is that Mr. Jack Hopeton was spouting about when we came up and caught him."

"Oh!" was my reply, "I was merely telling of the delightful promenade, by bright moonlight, I enjoyed last night with Miss Helen."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Frank, "'twas you, then, that I encountered several times on the colonnade, when I was promenading with that sweet young creature—I won't tell her name. I thought you two the most troublesome, annoying couple, I ever saw, and kept wishing you would go back to dancing."

Mrs. Bently tried to look unconcerned, but she could not help smiling at Helen, who, in spite of her efforts, sat blushing.

But Mr. Bently looked very grave—almost angry

—at least I fancied so. However, he was a well-bred man, and he tried to change the subject.

“Frank,” said he, suddenly, “have you heard anything more from home? Any letters?”

“No, sir.”

“We may be compelled to leave in a day or two.”

“Leave here, sir! Why, I never was enjoying myself better in my life, and I thought you all were pleased.”

“No doubt you think so, young man,” said Mr. Bently, almost sharply, “but there is something else for me, at least, to think about, besides pleasure. *You* can stay, if you wish.”

“Well, I’m sure that Helen would like to stay, also.”

“I certainly had rather remain,” said Helen.

“Yes,” said Frank, “I’ll take care of her, and make her behave herself.”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Bently, “you might see her once in twenty-four hours.”

“You don’t wish to remain, Helen,” asked her father, “when your parents wish you to go with them?”

“At least, father,” was the reply, “I’ll go with you without complaining.”

I felt myself rather *de trop* at this family discussion, however vital an interest I might possess in it, so I arose from the table to wait a more favorable opportunity to converse with Helen. As I went out, I met Fitzwarren, and exchanged salutations with him. He proceeded to where the Bentlys were.

"Stop, Fitz," said I, "don't go there ; they are having a family consultation."

"Ah !" said he. "Well, I'll aid them."

I was astonished at this reply, and still more so when the man actually did go, and, with his graceful but ceremonious bow, seat himself close to the group I had just left. I did not stop again, but went upstairs.

Going into the parlor, I found Mrs. Holmes, Miss Kate Morgan, and other ladies of my acquaintance. Tom Harper was there, also, sure enough, paying the agreeable to Kate. I thought I would try to find out what Mrs. Holmes thought of Uncle Charley. She was surrounded by beaux, as usual, but I made my bow.

When I first noticed her she seemed to be flirting even more recklessly than usual, but there was an occasional abstraction in her manner, as her eye rested on vacancy, after I had watched her a little while, which made me think her heart, or at least her mind, was far away. It was during one of these moments of abstraction I approached her.

"Ah ! Mr. Hopeton," said she, extending her hand, as her countenance brightened, "you don't know how much pleasure it affords me to see you. How is your excellent mother ?"

"Well, Mrs. Holmes," I answered.

"And your kind father ?"

"Well, also. I hope, Mrs. Holmes—but it would be supererogatory to ask—I am happy to see that you

are well, and capable of slaying hearts." But are you as cruel as ever?

"I look for this from casual acquaintances, Mr. Hopeton. Indeed, it may be said that I have sought it," said the lady, sadly; "but in you I consider it unkind."

There seemed to be something in Mrs. Holmes words or manners, or both, which soon scattered the knot of admirers by which she was surrounded when I went up. We were left alone.

"Those happy days I spent at Hopeton," continued the lady, "are a pleasant reminiscence for me, but I fear"—she hesitated and blushed—"I fear," she continued, "they have destroyed my peace."

"I believe, Mrs. Holmes," said I, "they destroyed the peace of another also—Mr. Charley Hampton."

"Do you know, Mr. Hopeton, that flirts are the most miserable beings on earth?"

"I had some such idea."

"It is true. They finally, when they think themselves most secure, fall truly and seriously in love with some one who trifles with their affections."

"Mrs. Holmes, you have had no such experience as this?"

We had found a seat on a sofa in one corner of the room, and no one could see the face of the lady, as she had turned it toward the wall. Just at this juncture, the party I had left at breakfast came into the parlor; only Mrs. Bently was on her husband's arm, Helen on Fitzwarren's, and Frank was missing.

Fitzwarren entered into close conversation with Mr. Bently. Immediately the ladies excused themselves and left the parlor, while Fitzwarren and Mr. Bently walked off in earnest conference. Now the parlor was entirely deserted, except by Mrs. Holmes and myself. I turned to look at my companion.

She had leaned her head and covered her eyes, while from under her hand burning tears trickled down her cheeks. A moment she sat thus, and then mastered her emotion, as she raised her pale, tearful countenance, and said :

"Every heart has its sorrow the world knows not of. In your father's house have I experienced what I tell you of."

"Mrs. Holmes," said I again, "you must allude to Uncle Charley. If so, let me assure you of your mistake. But suffer me to ask you a question : Do you love him?"

"Alas ! that I should so humiliate myself—yes."

"Then I assure you, that not on this earth could you bestow your affections on a more worthy object. A truer, more devoted, more chivalrous heart does not beat."

"Yes, but he does not love me."

"If I mistake not, he gave you to understand that he did."

"According to your account of him, this would be evidence, but for one fact. You know the little circumstances which preceded our foolish flirtation—flirtation on his part ; sad, unrequited love on mine.

We entered into it forewarned and forearmed. Of course he considered himself—and I *can't* blame him—justifiable in using any means to get the best of the contest. A declaration of love under such circumstances does not amount to anything, even from such a true-hearted man as you describe Mr. Hampton to be."

"If you love Uncle Charley, Mrs. Holmes, on the honor of a gentleman, and one who has *never* flirted, I tell you he loves you."

"Love him? Alas, for my happiness—you are the son of your father, Mr. Hopeton, and therefore discreet?"

"On my life, madam, I will be so."

"Well, I love Mr. Hampton, madly, devotedly!"

And the unhappy lady hid her face.

"Then," said a deep voice, and the speaker seated himself between us and took Mrs. Holmes' hand, "if the devotion of life, body, heart, soul, to your service, will render me worthy of that love, I will become worthy."

It was Uncle Charley, who had come during the night by private conveyance—he *would* travel in fine style.

Without even shaking hands with the gentleman, I left the parlor.

So much for the happiness of others; but the next time I saw Mr. and Mrs. Bently, I was sure they looked coldly on me, though they treated me with scrupulous politeness. No smile, no cordiality of

manner evinced the pleasure they used to exhibit when they saw me. What to make of it I knew not. There was nothing in their bearing of which I could request an explanation, but enough to convince me that something unfavorable to my happiness was at work in their minds.

The ball-room was crowded again that night, and I was talking earnestly to Mrs. Holmes. Uncle Charley had told me how they had pledged mutual love to each other that morning. Turning to leave her, I saw Fitzwarren and Helen Bently talking together—at least he was addressing her with an eagerness and animation, entirely unusual with him, while she was looking in the direction toward where I had been standing.

At first her face wore an expression rather sad than otherwise, but when our eyes met, she first colored, and then, as I approached her, with the proud and haughty bearing she knew so well how to assume, returning my bow, she immediately turned and sought another part of the room. I was thunder-struck and speechless.

"There, Jack," said Fitzwarren. "That is a specimen of feminine caprice for you."

"I see," was my reply.

"I thought there was the very best understanding between you two."

"There was."

"Thank God! no woman has ever yet had the opportunity to jilt me."

"Why, Fitz, do you suppose such an infliction is in store for me?"

"I don't know what such conduct on the part of a lady to whom one is engaged means. My education on this point has been neglected. I am entirely ignorant; but if I were in your fix, that *flight*, if unexplained, would be sufficient cause for some jilting on one side or the other."

I was silent, for I was thinking.

"There is something the matter, Jack," continued Fitzwarren. "Miss Bently's manner toward me was very cold, and I was trying to divine the cause, when you came up."

"And did you make any discoveries?"

"No."

"The parents also, Fitz, treated me very coldly to-day."

"Ah! and they did me. Well," continued Fitzwarren, musingly, "I can account for that, but why should Miss Bently treat *me* with reserve merely, while toward you she showed actual repugnance?"

"How do you account for it?" said I, eagerly, catching at the first part of the sentence.

"Do you see that man?" asked Fitzwarren, fixing his eyes intently toward a corner of the room.

Following the direction of this glance, I saw Lorraine.

"Yes."

"He is the arch agitator."

And Fitzwarren left me, abruptly.

Again I was near Helen, and this time she could not get away very easily.

"Miss Helen," said I, "will you allow me the honor of dancing the next cotillon with you?"

"I am engaged," she said coldly.

"Well, the next, then?"

"I am engaged for that also."

She had avoided looking at me, so far. For a moment I was silent, trying to catch her eye. At length she looked up, and I gazed inquiringly at her. At first her look was cold and haughty, but she read in mine a sad and sorrowful surprise, and hers faltered, while the tell-tale blood mounted to her forehead.

"May I," at length I spoke, "may I hope to have the pleasure of dancing with you any time during the evening?"

"I fear," she said, in a low tone, "that the cotillons for which I am already engaged will fatigue me so much that I shall be compelled to——"

"True," said I. "Your excuse is sufficient."

"And now, Miss Helen," I resumed, after a pause, "one more question; shall I *ever* dance with you again?"

"I cannot say," was the almost inaudible reply.

"Indeed, Mr. Hopeton," she continued, again, assuming a proud, offended look, "you put questions you have no right to ask."

"No right, Miss Bently?—but I beg your pardon."

I turned away with a feeling of bitterness at my heart to which I had before been a stranger. What a difference in my feelings one short day had produced ! What can it all mean ? I asked of myself. To request an explanation of Helen, after her conduct toward me, would be too humiliating. And when I thought of her injustice in not allowing me an opportunity of vindicating myself from the charge I knew must have been preferred against me, my indignation almost overcame every other feeling.

But I sought diversion and forgetfulness in the dance. Several times I was in the same set with Helen. She was reserved and dignified. No word or look of recognition passed between us. I noticed, whenever I touched her hand, that it was icy cold—that hand which the evening before was so warm and thrilling in its touch.

If I sought my pillow twenty-four hours before, the happiest of mortals, that night I left the ball-room the most miserable.

As I passed along an ill-lighted corridor, to my room, I saw two men in close conference. As I approached, disturbed by my footsteps, they both turned, and the rays of my little lamp fell on their faces. They were Lorraine and Fitzwarren !

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Chapter Twenty-sixth.

AFTER breakfast next morning, I concluded that a long walk in the wild woods—a protracted communion with Nature, in her solitude—might calm and soothe my perturbed and restless spirit. It was one of those delightfully cool days which sometimes come, even in our hot climate, about the last of July, and I passed by the springs, and, taking a road which wound around through the vine-clad hills, was soon out of sight and hearing of the thing *we* call *society*.

I was always fond of these lonely rambles. A keen huntsman, still I loved often to wander forth without gun or dog, far away from the haunts of men, where I could muse undisturbedly. In my troubles heretofore—but they had been very few, and compared with my present one, very light—in all my troubles, these strolls had been most effective in restoring me to cheerfulness.

I had not consulted Tom Harper or Uncle Charley concerning my griefs, because I knew they were both absorbed in plans of their own, and I did not believe they could assist me in the least. Fitzwarren I did not seek that morning, because several circumstances which will occur to the reader's mind, had raised within me a half suspicion against him.

A little path, leading out of the main road, attracted my notice, and I turned into it. It ran close to the

way I had left, for some distance, separated and hidden from it by a thick, continuous clump of whortleberry bushes. After a while I sat down on a log to rest, and soon I heard approaching footsteps and voices. I recognized Fitzwarren's deep tones, and heard him address his companion as Mr. Bently. With the suspicions I had of the former, and the inexplicable change in the deportment of the latter, am I to be blamed for sitting still and silent? especially when I heard my own name called?

At any rate, I did not move, and they walked along the road, close by where I sat.

"I assure you, sir," said Fitzwarren, "he is a villain of the deepest dye. His word is totally unworthy of belief."

"I can hardly think so, Mr. Fitzwarren," was the reply.

"What! Have I not given you proof sufficient?"

"No, sir."

"Is not that newspaper notice sufficient?"

"I repeat, Mr. Fitzwarren, no. I require further proof, before I will believe so harshly of one who has proved himself such a friend to my son, and who, in all his acts which have come under my knowledge, has proved himself the gentleman."

"Well, one thing is sure, Mr. Bently; what I have undertaken, I will accomplish. I have undertaken to place Hopeton before you in his true light——"

"That is precisely what I wish."

"Well, suspend your judgment awhile. You shall have proof so overwhelming, that you can doubt no longer. Give me time, and I'll——"

The last few words I heard more and more indistinctly; and at last, as they passed on, only a confused murmur fell on my ear, and then a total silence succeeded. I sat stunned and motionless; one to have seen me, would have said I was transformed into stone. I don't know that I have a very distinct recollection of what passed through my brain, for some moments. I only knew that, at first, complete, bewildering astonishment shut out every other sensation.

"Fitzwarren a traitor!" It could not be. I must be dreaming; and I got up to walk about to see whether I was sleeping or waking. Long time I wandered through the forest, in various directions, revolving schemes of vengeance. The truth is, I was almost crazed. I was in the midst of the first real trouble I had ever known. One thing I resolved—that I would have quick and signal revenge on Fitzwarren. I would have him "out" immediately, and we would fight to the death.

"Fortunately," said I to myself, "he is no coward. He will be willing to fight as desperately as I can wish."

Having taken my resolution, toward noon, I hastened back to the hotel. Walking up the steps, I saw Tom Harper, just going into the parlor. Dreadfully

excited though I was, I had sense enough left me not to make myself an object to be stared at. By a desperate effort, I assumed a tolerably calm exterior. I followed Tom, and found him gayly chatting with some ladies.

"I crave pardon for interrupting you," said I, approaching the group, "but Mr. Harper, I have some most urgent business with you. Will you go with me to our room?"

Tom's experienced eye read something beneath my calm exterior, and he immediately walked out with me.

"What is it, Jack?" he said, as soon as we were out of hearing of the company.

"I want you to act as my 'friend,' and I want you to make arrangements for me to fight just as quickly as is possible. Above all, I want you to have it understood that we fight to the death."

"Calm yourself, man!" said Tom. "You are excited. You tremble."

"It is with anger, then—not fear, Tom."

"Of course, I know that, Jack," answered my friend, reproachfully. "But it is none the less true that you are too much excited to act prudently."

"Prudence! Hell and fury! Tom! You don't know the cause I have for anger."

"No, I do not. I am anxious to find out."

Tom said this so quietly and coolly, that I grew ashamed of myself.

"I *will* be reasonable, Tom," I said, "and intelligible in a moment more."

"That is right, Jack. Take a glass of this wine."

"What kind is it?"

"A domestic article. One made by an old widow lady—a poor, but worthy neighbor of mine, whom I frequently assist. She is always showing her gratitude by making me little presents. Not long ago she sent me a half dozen bottles of wine."

"There," he continued, as he poured out a glass. "Drink that, and you will pronounce it good. It is not drugged, at least."

"Now," he said again, after I had swallowed the wine, "who is it that you are so anxious to fight?"

"Fitzwarren."

"What! your friend?"

"Yes."

"What is his offence?"

"The same as Hardaway's?"

"Ah!" hissed Tom.

"The same."

"Well you may rely on me to abet you in any plan by which you may obtain revenge; but just now the bird is flown?"

"What do you mean?"

"Fitzwarren left in the omnibus about an hour ago."

At this intelligence my rage overpowered me. I did not see, before, how I could even wait to go through with the formality of a challenge, and now that my revenge was postponed indefinitely, perhaps forever, I was almost frantic.

"Damn him! blast him!" I shouted. "The das-

tard ! Oh that such creatures should disgrace the image of man ! I thought he had been a *brave* villain, at least."

"And I," said Tom, "think so still. He could hardly deceive me in that regard. He has some motive for leaving here, of which you know nothing. Is he aware that you are informed of his treachery ?"

"I think not, for I only knew it a few hours ago, but he was well aware that I *would* discover it, and he has placed himself out of harm's way."

"Can't you send after him ?"

"I don't know where to send."

"Don't you know where he resides ?"

"No."

"Well, I always looked on the man as a mysterious personage, but thought he at least had a 'local habitation,' as well as a 'name.'"

I stood, musing.

"But give me the particulars of the affair, Jack," said my friend.

I complied.

"I think," said I, after finishing, "that I may perhaps get some clue from or at this man Lorraine, who is, I rather believe, an accomplice of Fitzwarren, although this last-named gentleman pretended to me to hate him."

"Lorraine ? Is he a tall, grave, dark-haired man with good address and courtly manners ?"

"Yes."

"Paid considerable attention to Helen Bently, and courted her family ?"

"The very same. He and Fitzwarren, I think, are both seeking Helen's favor, but, for the time, they have combined against me."

"This man went off in the same omnibus with Fitzwarren."

"God give me patience!" I exclaimed. "Well, we may meet again, and must, if they are about the Bentlys much. Go back now, Tom," I continued. "Enjoy yourself as best you may. I'll stay here awhile."

So completely miserable and even desperate was my tone and manner, that Tom looked at me sympathizingly. I believe he really feared to leave me in my own hands.

"Remember, Jack," he said, "the day of retribution will come. We must, if possible, find out of what you are accused."

I had sunk down moodily and stupidly in a chair, but these words aroused me.

"Tom," said I, "you must promise me one thing—not to say a word to the Bentlys in my behalf. Come," I continued, "I will not be so humiliated. I myself will see Helen once more. I shall tell her that I do not hope or wish to renew an engagement which I suppose she considers broken off, but that I demand to know with what I am charged, and who is my accuser, that I may hold him accountable."

"Well, Jack, I promise as you wish, but let me insist on a promise from you."

"Well?"

"Don't seek Miss Bently while you are angry."

"You don't think, Tom, I would insult a *lady*?"

"I know you would not. You don't understand me. What I mean is this. Perhaps Miss Bently does not consider the engagement broken off, and perhaps—"

"Tom," said I, interrupting him, "she has judged me harshly, and without giving me an opportunity to vindicate myself from the charges preferred against me. I am sure she *does* consider the engagement at an end.

"I am confused now," I continued, "and advice can only add to my confusion. *Do* leave me alone for a time."

"Well, I'll do it. But, Jack, promise me that when you go to Miss Bently, you will not go in anger."

"I'll try—that is all I can promise."

"That is sufficient."

As soon as Tom left, I fell at full length on a bed and gave myself up to despair. To be jilted was bad enough, but the thought that it had been brought about by a rival, and that he was out of reach of my vengeance, was past endurance.

I did not go down to dinner. I was late at supper. I did not enter the parlor or the ball room that evening, so I did not see Helen.—Late next morning I rang the bell and desired a servant to take my card to Miss Bently's room.

"Miss Bently is gone, sir," was the reply.

"Gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"When—where—how?"

"She and the rest of her family, sir, left on the omnibus this morning."

Chapter Twenty-seventh.

"DON'T say anything to me about it, Tom."

Such were my words when I next encountered my chum.

"All right. How much longer do you expect to stay here, Jack?"

"I don't know. Have you seen Uncle Charley to-day?"

"Yes, yonder he stands."

"Jack, my boy," said Uncle Charley, as I approached the spot where he stood, "You are an undutiful young dog."

"Wherein have I proved so, sir?" I asked.

"In that you have scarcely deigned to speak to me, since I have been here."

"It has been evident, Uncle Charley, to a person of the least penetration, that you have been very pleasantly engaged and did not wish to be interrupted."

"I do not deny, young sir, that I have been rather—well, I've enjoyed my stay here very much. Very clever, nice, select people here—very. Much

better than any one usually finds at a watering-place. But—"

"No doubt you think so, Uncle Charley," I answered, laughing—yes, I could even laugh.

"Now, sir," said my companion, with that exquisitely graceful wave of the hand for which he was celebrated. "Now you *do* interrupt. I was just going to say that, although I am spending time here pleasantly enough—"

"I am *sure* of it," again said I, as it was a great relief for me to indulge in a little mischief with Uncle Charley.

"You incorrigible scamp," said he, "I will leave you and seek those who can appreciate my conversation better.

"But, I say, Uncle Charley," I exclaimed, catching him by the arm, "if I am undutiful, you are ungrateful."

"How, boy?"

"I hardly think your situation would be so blissful, had it not been for some little assistance on my part. You were both afraid of each other, and if I had not interfered, you would never have brought matters to a focus."

"Ah! Jack," said Uncle Charley, dropping his artificial manner, "I *am* indebted to you, and but for the fact that *you* have been absorbed in your own matters, you would have afforded me an opportunity, ere now, to thank you and tell you how I am progressing."

"Well, sir," I answered calmly, "my affair is all over now, so I am at leisure to listen to your plans, and to aid you again, if I can. The mouse helped the lion once, you know."

"You pain me, Jack. I thought, and so did every one else, that you were getting on swimmingly. How came you to quarrel?"

"It is rather a long tale, Uncle Charley, and as yet, an unpleasant one. Of course I hide nothing from you, and when the wound heals over a little, you may inspect it. Although my voice is firm, I have not quite arrived at that point when I can say :

"Yea, even the name I have worshipped in vain,
Shall wake not a throb of remembrance again."

"I *will* get there, though. I am well aware, that 'To bear is to conquer our fate.' Let us hear of your case. Yours is all plain sailing now."

"I don't know, Jack. A man is never sure until the knot is tied. I have great confidence in the lady who has consented to take me for better or for worse, but everything is uncertain in this world.

"However," he continued, if you don't marry before the middle of October, I think I shall stand in need of your services as brides-man."

"And very proud and very happy will I be to fill the post, Uncle Charley."

I remained a few days longer at Catoosa, but I grew very weary of it. The way to forget one love is to engage in another. I could very easily have

fallen in love with Kate Morgan, but I believed Tom Harper regarded her with something very nigh akin to the tender passion.—There were plenty of other beautiful and accomplished ladies at the Springs, but none of them struck me. I would have to wait long before I found one equal to Helen Bently or Kate Morgan.

I left Uncle Charley, happy in the love of the woman he thought calculated to render him happy. I left Tom Harper, happy in the prospect of a favorable response from his love, whenever she should go to her home, so that he could address her. I went forth a restless, aimless, hopeless wanderer.

As long as the world stands, every man who is disappointed in love, will imagine that *he* is the most hapless of beings—that there is something peculiarly unfortunate in his particular case. This I know, that never, through the whole course of my life, has a thicker gloom overhung me than at the period of which I write. Go where I would, try what sources of amusement I might, the remembrance of the unfortunate termination to my dream of happiness was constantly before me.

I concluded to go to Virginia—not to hunt Fitz-warren specially, but I felt that I must be moving about, and there was a chance to find him there. First, I went to Charlottesville, but he had not been there in several years. Then I visited each of the watering-places in the State, examining the registers of the hotels. His name was not to be seen.

I had examined the registers at all the hotels, as I came up the State railroad of Georgia, without finding the name I sought. Finally, to satisfy my curiosity, I wrote to the proprietor of each hotel in Atlanta, and inquired if the name, Fitzwarren, could be found on their books, and what was the date on which it occurred, if it appeared at all.

It seemed that he had passed through Atlanta on the very day he left Catoosa. But how was I to ascertain which way he had gone from there? He might have gone back up the road; he might have gone down the road; he might have gone toward Macon, or he might have gone toward West Point. I had no hope of finding him, but concluded to make one more effort to satisfy my curiosity, so I wrote to the hotels at the stopping-places next to Atlanta, on each of the routes I have designated, asking whether Fitzwarren's name appeared on the register.

In due time the answers came, and I found my man had gone out west. Then I was at my row's end.

It may be asked why I did not publish Fitzwarren. I reply that, not for the world would I have done this. It would possibly have been doing the very thing for which I had so much reason to complain in others—condemning a person who had had no opportunity of defending himself—perhaps not even knowing that a charge had been preferred against him.

Not that I entertained any doubt concerning the matter, but I was young, inexperienced, and honest enough to set great store by a principle. Even now,

at this age, I acknowledge that the same failing may be charged upon me.

Chapter Twenty-eighth.

I WAS sitting before a hotel at Saratoga, quietly smoking a cigar, when who should drive up but Mr. and Mrs. Bently and daughter? I was not far from the ladies' entrance, and as the gentleman alighted, he caught my eye; for I was looking coolly, though rather curiously, at them. He seemed a little surprised; but bowed in his graceful, unembarrassed manner. Of course, I acknowledged the salutation as politely as I could.

After waiting on the ladies, Mr. Bently, in going to the office, had to pass close by where I sat. I rose as he approached, and we shook hands. His manner was not so cordial as it was during the early part of our acquaintance; neither was it half so cold as when I last saw him. I formed a sudden resolution, while talking with him.

"Mr. Bently," I said, "when you provide for the ladies of your party, and are at leisure, will you allow me an opportunity of having a long conversation with you on very particular business."

"Certainly—after I change my dress."

The opportunity was soon given.

"Let us take a stroll," said I. "It is better than to be pent up in any of these close rooms."

My position was somewhat embarrassing, and I hesitated a little as to how I should commence the conversation ; but I had been tolerably well trained, and a consciousness of right supported me.

" In the first place, Mr. Bently," were my opening words, " I will tell you now what, perhaps, I ought to have told you before, but what you doubtless perceived very plainly. At one time, I sought the honor of an alliance with your daughter. I also, once, flattered myself that I had obtained her love. I am now convinced of my mistake, nor do I hope ever to persuade her to look on me with favor. It became very evident to me, though, when you were at Catoosa, that you had heard something from some source, prejudicial to my character. Am I right in my opinion?"

" You are."

" Then, since I believe you once regarded me as a friend?"—I paused, and looked at him inquiringly.

" You are certainly right, again," said he.

" In the name of that friendship, then, and in the name of justice, I ask of you, of what I am accused?"

" I am glad," replied Mr. Bently, " that you sought this interview, though I acknowledge that, at one time, I avoided anything like it. Since then, circumstances have caused me to alter my opinion somewhat. As I came on here, I made some inquiries concerning your accuser, and I believe he is wearing an assumed name. That, of itself, is sufficient to awaken suspicion against him."

"I was not aware of that, before."

"It is even so, I think. But first, I must account to you for my seeming injustice in not allowing you a hearing. The proof of the allegation brought against you, was apparently so plain, and of a nature seemingly so independent of the character of the accuser, that it appeared *impossible* to controvert it."

"Still, Mr. Bently, you must recollect that the meanest, lowest, most abject, abandoned, friendless criminal on earth, is not condemned by law without a hearing."

"That is true, Mr. Hopeton, and I confess that I was wrong. But you are mistaken, if you think that I *entirely* condemned you. I suspended my judgment for a time, till the inquiries which had been set on foot should be satisfied. *During* that time—I do not wish to wound you—but, during that time, I did not wish my daughter to receive attention from one who had been accused—and with such overwhelming evidence—of such dark crimes."

I could not help turning pale with anger at these words, but I was resolved to be calm.

"And who," said I, "was so well calculated to conduct those inquiries as myself? At least, who would be so much *interested* in having them properly answered? On the contrary, I do not even know that I have been arraigned."

"I have already acknowledged, Mr. Hopeton, that I acted wrong. I now ask your pardon for so doing."

"Then, sir, I am sorry I alluded to it the second time. I will not do so again."

"When I tell you," resumed Mr. Bently, "that the inquiries I speak of are conducted by one who is a warm friend of yours, and who, I think, will take as much interest as you yourself would, in the matter, my conduct will appear still less culpable in your eyes."

I considered who this friend could be, and thought it must be Frank Bently or Tom Harper.

"But I see," resumed Mr. Bently, "you are impatient to know with what you are charged. You are calm enough to listen, I hope?"

"I think I am. I know my accuser, and no slander is too gross for such a villain."

"In the first place, then, count one of the indictment: you are accused of murder and robbery in Galveston, Texas, on the —— day of ——, eighteen hundred and ——."

"And the proof?"

"A copy of the Galveston paper, containing a proclamation offering a reward of one hundred dollars for the apprehension of one John Hopeton, of Georgia, who had committed murder and robbery on the day and year aforesaid."

"You see, Mr. Bently," said I, "how very calm I am. I have been astonished so often, lately—that is, I have heard so many wonderful things, that if the ground beneath our feet should yawn at this moment, I believe I could preserve the most stoical indifference—but have you the paper?"

"I have. Here it is."

I took it, and it was even so. The light flashed on me in an instant. It was just as I expected. Lorraine and Fitzwarren were confederates. The former was in Galveston, the reader will recollect, on the day I witnessed the murder recorded in the first part of this book. He saw me retreat hastily—I had heard of my mother's illness, and did not wish to be detained as a witness—and he considered this a fine opportunity of wreaking or commencing the vengeance he had threatened against me.

He was favorably known there to the principal inhabitants, and was believed when he pointed out my flight, denounced me as the criminal, and described my person. Galveston papers hardly ever reached our State, and I saw nothing of the proclamation. No doubt the real criminal was soon discovered and brought to justice, or I would have been hunted up.

Fitzwarren, then, had obtained this array of apparently incontrovertible testimony from Lorraine—the *par nobile fratrum*! This was the “newspaper notice” about which I had heard him speak to Mr. Bently.

“This,” said I at length, returning the newspaper, “is plain enough. Now for the rest.”

“Count number two, then. Some time ago, in Florida, a man was hung by lynch law. It was about the time—it was between the first and second visits you made to Bentwold. The newspapers were full of dark hints and rumors concerning the matter, but nothing definite was known. It is said you were present aiding and abetting.”

"The devil incarnate!" I could not help exclaiming. "And he was present himself, aiding and abetting to the full extent that I was."

"You admit this, then?" asked Mr. Bently quickly.

"Certainly. I can justify the act, though. You admit that such proceedings are right under some circumstances?"

"These circumstances must be very aggravated, and the law must be inefficient to punish the criminal, before I would resort to such means."

"This was the case, precisely."

"But you astonish me when you say Lorraine was with you at the hanging."

"Lorraine?"

"Yes."

"I said no such thing."

"Did you not say your accuser was at the hanging?"

"My accuser?"

The truth is, I was somewhat bewildered.

"Isn't Fitzwarren my accuser?"

"Fitzwarren!" echoed Mr. Bently, for it was his turn to be astonished. "Fitzwarren! why, he is gone to Texas as fast as steam can carry him, to obtain proof of your innocence. He sought me—asked the reason why I had changed my deportment toward you; when I told him, he denounced Lorraine as a villain of the deepest dye—said he would obtain proof that he was unworthy of belief—showed me a

newspaper notice of his meanness and chicanery—declared you should have justice rendered you—that you should stand before me in your true light.

“All this he did, and left Catoosa for Galveston in two hours after he had pledged himself to prove your innocence.”

“Thank God !” I exclaimed. “Then Fitzwarren is not the traitor I deemed him. Noble, self-sacrificing friend ! How can I ever repay him ! You know not, Mr. Bently,” I continued, “what a singular confidence he displays in me. He knows nothing of this Galveston business, but believing me innocent merely from what he knows of my character now, he pledges himself for me and starts on a long journey to obtain the proof he believes must exist.”

“But what could have induced you to believe that Fitzwarren was your betrayer ?” asked Mr. Bently.

I related what I had heard pass between Fitzwarren and him.

“People,” said I, when I had finished my narration, “may differ as to whether my act of listening was quite honorable. I did not seek an opportunity of eavesdropping. I was convinced that I had been slandered. The man who, I thought, had cast aspersions on my character, and the man who heard the slanders, passed close to me. I heard my name mentioned, and thought I would have the opportunity of unmasking a traitor. Under these circumstances, I think I was justifiable in hearing all I could.”

“I believe, on the whole, I would act just as you did,” was Mr. Bently’s reply.

I then gave him a detailed account of the hanging, and the circumstances leading to it; only, instead of mentioning Tom Harper's name, I merely designated him as a "dear friend." As witnesses, I referred him to Fitzwarren and Gaunt, and if these were insufficient, he could go to—— county, and make as many inquiries as he chose.

As to the other affair," said I, "as soon as I get back home, I shall start for Galveston myself, unless Fitzwarren shall arrive by that time with sufficient proof to establish my innocence. My business, now, is to have a reckoning—and it will be a heavy one with the man who has slandered me. Can you inform me where Lorraine is at this time?"

"I cannot."

"Then, I suppose I must wait till I find him."

"I am now pretty well convinced," said Mr. Bently, "that the charges brought against you are unfounded, and that—"

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you," said I, "but since you do not *demand* proof of my innocence, you shall have it. All I ask of you is, to wait—do not believe me guilty, and do not believe me innocent."

"I will believe you innocent," said Mr. Bently, with a sudden impulse.

"I vastly prefer that you will not—that you will treat me as a stranger—a passing acquaintance, of whose character you know nothing. However, you can use your own pleasure in the matter."

"Where will you be one month from now, Mr. Bently?" I continued.

"At Bentwold—happy to see you at any time."

"I wanted to beg leave to call on you and your family, with Fitzwarren, and show how utterly false are the slanders that have been uttered against me."

"I will be glad to see you at my house, any way."

And the interview was ended.

Chapter Twenty-ninth.

THE next day I left Saratoga, and travelled with all the speed I could command toward home. I found Tom Harper and told him everything that had passed.

"And Tom," said I, "now I want you to go with me to Galveston—unless you are too much occupied with affairs of the heart."

"Oh, I can go," he answered. "Kate and I are getting on swimmingly, but I can spare time sufficient to go with you."

Steam soon carried us to the young island city. Arrived at the hotel, we registered our names. As I turned from the office, in passing the door of the reading room, I saw Fitzwarren's cold pale face, as he sat looking over a newspaper. Stepping up, before he was aware of my presence, I laid a hand on his shoulder. Coolly he raised his eyes.

"Ah, Jack!" he said, as he threw down the newspaper.

"My dear friend!" I exclaimed, seizing his hand and shaking it vehemently. "I have known you long, but never have I felt half the pleasure in meeting you that I do now."

"Well, if you only knew my mission here, and the success I have met with, I should not be surprised at your joy; but since——"

"I *do* know it."

"How?"

"Mr. Bently told me."

"But, Fitz," I continued, "if you only knew with what great injustice I have treated you, I do not believe you could help hating me."

"I do not see, Jack, how you have mistreated me. I have not felt any of the effects of your injustice, at least."

"Oh! I have done nothing which could injure you, because I was made aware how incorrect was my opinion concerning you; but I misconstrued your motives—judged you harshly—wrongfully."

"You could hardly do that, Jack," said Fitzwarren, smiling bitterly. "When you know the history of my life, no opinion concerning me will seem too harsh."

"At least, though—— but let me tell you what I thought, and then you can say whether or not I judged you incorrectly."

Briefly and hurriedly I then ran over the events

which had occurred, from the morning when I overheard Mr. Bently and him, up to the moment when I found him in the reading room—justifying my eavesdropping as well as I could. He listened, unmoved, to the whole. Not a trace of emotion was manifest in his countenance while I told of the deep villany I thought he had committed.

“I must acknowledge, Jack,” he said at length, “that you did misjudge me in *this* instance. Now, let me tell you what I have been about, since that morning. This will show you how much pains I have taken to serve you, and I hope my devotion will tend somewhat to modify the opinion you must entertain of me, when you hear how wicked I was in early life—for the time has come to tell you all. I must relieve my mind by a confession.

“My first business was to prove Lorraine unentitled to belief. For this purpose I have been to Missouri and obtained a certified copy of proceedings when his name was struck off the list of attorneys in that State, for mal-practice. How I knew this had been done, you will perceive, in time.

“As to this Florida hanging, you and Tom Harper can best manage it.

“My next step was to come to Galveston and look into this robbery case. I found, as I expected, that there was a mistake in the matter. The Galveston paper that Lorraine showed Mr. Bently was genuine, and the proclamation was by authority. Lorraine himself had made a deposition against you, before a

magistrate; but before the proclamation had been published the second time, the man who had perpetrated the crime was discovered, and, moreover, it came to light that if any robbery had been committed, it must have been by your accuser.

"He saw the turn affairs were taking in time to make his escape from justice. In the next number of the Galveston papers was a statement of the affair as it really happened; they apologizing to 'Mr. John Hopeton, of Georgia,' and denouncing Lorraine as a perjured man, and, probably, a thief. We can get—I have already made the arrangement—copies of these newspapers. I have also applied for certified copies of all the proceedings against the man who committed murder in Galveston on the very day of your alleged crime.

"But besides this, all the papers have promised, in their next issues, to review the whole matter, exonerating you, and reiterating the charges against Lorraine. Everything will be ready, in a few days, so that we can start back to Georgia—or—or Florida, Jack," said Fitzwarren, with a feeble, ghastly smile.

It struck me that there was something very peculiar in that smile. Indeed, I had thought, several times, when talking to him about Florida, and about Helen Bently, that his smile had a very strange meaning—that it was forced, in fact.

"Fitz," said I, "let me ask you the same question you once asked me. Do you love Helen Bently?"

"Let us go up to my room, Jack," he replied, "and I'll give you a very short sketch of my life. You can then see whether I am in love."

I complied, and we were soon seated, alone, and free from interruption. My companion was for some moments after we reached his room, silent. He seemed agitated—much more so than I had ever seen him—and at a loss how to begin. At length, however, he commenced in his usual firm tone:

"I am about to reveal to you, Jack, things I have never told to any mortal except one benefactor, now dead. I am about to give a detailed account of circumstances which happened years ago, so dreadful in their nature that never, since their occurrence, have I dared to review them, minutely, even in my own mind. It is true, their memory, like a dark shadow, has given coloring to almost every thought and feeling of my existence, but it has been in spite of a continual effort on my part to shut out the horrible recollection.

"I must not waste words in a preface, though. I was born in Maryland. My mother was an intellectual, accomplished woman, kind and indulgent, but firm in her discipline. I was truly blessed in having such a parent, for, while she lived, she soothed, curbed, and to a great extent subdued, in me, as devilish a spirit as ever was allowed to afflict mortal. Had that mother survived till now, who knows but I might have been living a quiet, innocent, peaceful, happy life, at the old homestead? As it is, I am a restless, miserable, guilty outcast and wanderer.

"You are surprised to hear me speak so disparagingly of myself, Jack—I who am so proud, so haughty, so disdainful in my intercourse with my fellow-men. I make such confessions to none other than you, but although I appear to despise the world, and most people suppose I do, I am all the time feeling as if the world despises me.

"When I was twelve years old, my mother died.

"My mother! * * * *

Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?"

"My father was a rather weak man, intellectually, and a very poor disciplinarian. Sometimes he would allow me to follow my own inclinations without control, and again he would treat me with harsh severity; imposing the most galling restraints. You may easily guess what effect such a course had on a disposition like mine.

"I was born to be miserable myself, and to make those around me unhappy. An extraordinary person, like my mother, might, with the best sort of management, have made my life endurable. Such a man as my father, would only aggravate my natural moroseness and vindictiveness.

"I was an only son, and my father was wealthy. His property consisted mostly in stocks. He had invested in this way—merely reserving his house and a small part of his estate to live on—to avoid the trouble of managing a large amount of real estate.

“ For some years after my mother’s death, we lived alone, on this small estate, but my father’s health grew feeble. At length he was persuaded by his brother to sell the house he lived in and go to reside with this brother. This uncle of mine had an eye to the wealth he knew my father possessed. In an evil hour for me, this arrangement was entered into.

“ My uncle was a bad man ; so violent in temper that he was feared by those of his acquaintances who were in the least weak or timid. My father stood in great awe of him, and, at the same time, allowed him to have much influence over his own mind.

“ My uncle’s household consisted of a wife and three sons—great, stout chaps—two older than myself, and another about my age. He had another son, who was a practising lawyer—a very young one, though—in the neighboring town. The boys who lived with their parents were rough, rather boorish fellows, although their father was amply able to afford them good advantages, and had been pretty well educated himself. The lawyer was a man of considerable talent and polish.

“ What concerned me more immediately, however, the boys were disposed to be very tyrannical, and their father always took their side in any dispute they might have with me—while *my* father, fearing his brother, and often really persuaded by him that I was a very quarrelsome and disagreeable boy, so far from taking my part, used to abuse me terribly for a ‘ devilish dog.’

I know—I have already said—I *was* devilish, but if my cousins had not hunted me up and sought occasion for quarrels, there would never have been any between us; for I always avoided them. I had an invincible aversion to them, on account of their boorishness and total want of education. As for me, my mother had taken care to teach me books and good manners also.

“From this mother I also inherited a bold spirit. I feared nothing. My cousins, though overbearing, were cowardly. I was possessed of incredible personal strength, and they were well aware of it, so they took good care to avoid personal rencounters. In all our frequent quarrels, they used to appeal to their father, or my father—no matter which—the decision was always against me, and sometimes I was *flogged*—flogged, Jack——” Fitzwarren’s voice sunk into a whisper, and his lips grew ashy, parting wide over his clenched teeth.

“I have been whipped, Jack,” he resumed, “on my bare shoulders, by my own father, till the blood ran down my back, because I would not yield to the whims of the mean, despicable, arrogant fellows, my cousins.

“But never could they extort from me one whine—never from my hot and seared eyeballs came one tear. With blanched cheek, but steady gaze, mute as the wolf torn and mangled by the dogs, I used to endure all the punishment they chose to inflict upon me.

“As to tears, I shed some on the occasion of my

mother's death—at that time I think all the material out of which they are formed was exhausted, for I have not wept one since.

“When I was fourteen, I was allowed to go off to school, where I remained one year. At the end of that time I came home. I had been away from tyranny so long—I *happened* to get to a *good* institution—that I had grown unused to it. Besides, I had some of the feelings of approaching manhood. My cousins immediately commenced their bickerings, and, as before, my father took their part.

“I would not dispute with them, hoping by this course to get rid of them. I was determined to put an end to these persecutions, and I was resolved to submit to no more unjust flogging.

“Unfortunately, my cousins mistook my forbearance for cowardice. They concluded that I had at length quailed beneath their united assaults. Idiots! They forgot that the tiger always *crouches* just before he makes his deadly spring.

“One day, my uncle and his three sons, my father and myself, were out in the yard. I had ordered a horse to be saddled, for me to ride to town. It was my father's favorite saddle horse, and one which my cousins frequently rode, often without the trouble of asking leave. As I started out to the gate, Jasper Fitzwarren, the one about my own age, and who was much bolder than his brothers, exclaimed to me :

“‘Warren, what are you going to do with Peacock?’—that was the horse's name.

“ ‘I am going to ride him.’

“ ‘Where are you going?’

“ ‘That is no concern of yours, Jasper.’

• “ ‘But it is. I want to ride Peacock myself.’

“ ‘I made no reply, but walked on toward the gate.

“ ‘Come, sir,’ said my father to me, ‘if Jasper wants Peacock, you must let him have him.’

“ ‘But, father,’ said I, ‘you told me I might ride him.’

“ ‘You may have any other horse you want,’ said my uncle, now speaking for the first time.

“ ‘I do not *want* any other,’ said I, in a low, distinct tone.

“ ‘You perverse wretch!’ exclaimed my father; ‘if you are not careful, I’ll give you a flogging. You’ve been without it so long, you’ve got above yourself.’

“ ‘Jasper,’ he continued, turning to my cousin, ‘you may ride Peacock if you wish to do so.’

“ ‘I started toward the gate again. Jasper caught hold of me to pull me back. I stopped, gave him one look, then shook him off and walked toward the horse once more. He caught hold of me several times between the door and the horse-rack, and each time I merely got loose from him, without proceeding any further. I reached the horse and laid my hand on the bridle.

“ ‘Warren,’ now exclaimed Jasper, enraged by my coolness, and made bold by my forbearance, ‘you shan’t ride Peacock. Uncle says I may ride him, so let him loose, you impertinent scoundrel!’

"I *did* let him go, but it was only to give Jasper one more warning look, and then I again took hold of the bridle. My cousin seized my arm. I thrust him rudely to some distance from me, and was in the act of mounting. My uncle and the other two boys, with my father, had by this time started toward me—my father, in his unnatural zeal, far ahead of the rest.

"As soon as Jasper recovered from the thrust I had given him, he rushed toward me. I did not think he would venture so far, and was totally unprepared, when he suddenly spat in my face, and followed up this outrage by striking me on the head, with his whole might, with a club he had picked off the ground.

"I cannot say that I became excited, Jack—I do not think I was hurried or flustered in the least—but a demon at that moment usurped the throne of reason, and assumed *complete* and undisputed sway over me.

"Quick as thought, I drew a small, keen dagger, and plunged it up to the very hilt in the breast of my cousin. He sank down. The demon was not yet satisfied, and I drew out the dagger. Again I drove it into the body before me, and wrenched it back and forth.

"By this time, my father reached me. If he had only caught hold of me, I would never have harmed him. But he raised his cane, and the blows showered thick and heavy on my head and shoulders. He

had me by the arm. In a moment more I would have been seized by my uncle and cousins. The *demon* again commanded, and I obeyed.

"Once more I raised high the bloody dagger. It descended, and my father fell a corpse at my feet."

"Great God! Fitzwarren," I could not help exclaiming.

"Let me go on, Jack," he answered in a hollow voice, "It is my business to relate events to you in as few words as possible. *Think* what you please, but don't talk till I get through.

"I fled. Even had one of those present been as swift of foot as myself, he would not have dared to pursue me, after what I had already done, and as I crossed high fences, they could not follow me on horseback.

"I proceeded immediately, on foot, through fields and byways, to the house of Mr. Jerrold—an eccentric old bachelor, who hated my uncle, and had frequently petitioned my father to let him take me to his house. He resided about a dozen miles from my uncle's, and it was night when I reached his door.

"In two minutes I told him what had happened.

"'From this moment, then, Jack,' he said, 'you may look on me as a father—but it won't do for you to remain here. As soon as you have eaten and rested you must go on.'

"'I can neither eat nor rest,' was my reply.

"So, two horses were saddled, and we rode to the nearest railroad station. My kind benefactor put me

on the cars, and started me, with an abundant supply of money, to a school in North Carolina, while he rode back home the same night.

"At this school I remained several years, my friend coming to see me frequently, but never allowing me to go back to his house.

"From him I learned that my uncle, after my flight, produced a will of my father, in which the latter bequeathed his whole fortune to my uncle and his sons. Of course they spread the report far and wide concerning my two homicides, but Mr. Jerrold said that they were in such bad odor, no one believed what they said. In fact, they were suspected of having murdered my father and me, and of having forged the will.

"So strong did the suspicion become ~~that~~ their situation grew very uncomfortable, and they left the State.

"I may as well tell you, now, what became of them. The lawyer went to Missouri, where he practised successfully awhile, finally spent all his share of the property, and his name was stricken off the list of attorneys. He now goes under the name of Lorraine.

"My uncle and the other two boys are your neighbors. They have assumed the name of Warlock.

"I say my kind old friend never allowed me to go *back* to his house, but he lodged a large sum of money—quite a competency—in the hands of a

trustee, to be used for my support and education—in case he should die—during my minority, and when I became of age, to be given unreservedly into my hands. The worthy man is long since dead—peace to his ashes!

“ You know pretty well what sort of life I lived at the university. It was the same from the time my good old friend died, up to the period at which I formed your acquaintance.

“ I frequently travelled about for a few months at a time, and you did not know where I was. In those expeditions I was urged by no particular object. Restlessness had more to do with these wanderings than anything else.

“ I forswore love, but when I saw Helen Bently—listen calmly, now, Jack—when I saw Helen Bently, I felt as does the idolator of the East, when, at the end of his long and weary—almost hopeless—pilgrimage, he beholds, at length, the shrine he has so often despaired of reaching. Had I followed the impulse of my heart, I should have fallen down and worshipped her.

“ I soon found though, Jack, that *you* loved her. I cannot give you any idea of the fierce struggle in my bosom between love, selfishness, and my evil genius, on the one hand, and friendship for you, on the other. Suffice it to say, that the latter triumphed. I saw Lorraine cast an evil eye on you, and I resolved to watch him, and defend you from his wiles.

"He and I had recognized each other, though I was a mere boy when I fled my father's house. I had not changed my name, and this helped his memory. He *had* changed his name, but I traced out the old lineaments in his face. I don't forget.

"I have been hasty and wandering in my narrative, Jack; but I hope I have been tolerably intelligible. If I have not, some other time I will answer your inquiries.

"My only object now, for a long while, has been to see you made happy. When that is actually accomplished——"

Fitzwarren ceased abruptly, and leaned his head on his hand. He had failed to enlighten me on certain points—some he had spoken of—but I would not question him then. We were both silent for some moments.

"What do you think now?" suddenly asked my companion.

"I think that you were very unfortunate, Fitzwarren," was my reply.

"Of course, you do—but we mustn't sit moping here. Let's go out, and finish your business."

Chapter Thirtieth.

FITZWARREN had so arranged everything that it took us but little time to finish our business, and one bright day we left Galveston and steamed swiftly out of the beautiful bay. I carried the proofs which were to restore me to the favor of those whose good opinion I prized so highly. I bore a light heart, for hope had again sprung up, and I thought that now Helen Bently would cease to look coldly, since she would find how groundless were the charges against me.

At Mobile, our party broke up.

"Tom," said I, "will you go with me to Bentwold?"

"The mischief!" was Tom's reply. "I thought you were going home first."

"No. I can't rest till I show the Bentlys that I have been slandered, and that I am, at this moment, as deserving of their friendship as I ever was."

"Well, I can't blame you for being anxious to see Miss Helen, under the circumstances."

"You will go with me, then?"

"Do you think you will require my services, Jack?"

"I don't know that I do need them, Tom, but I would be glad for you to go."

"Then, if I can be of no benefit to you, I prefer

going home. Recollect, *I've* got a sweetheart now, too."

"You are excusable, Tom. You, of course," I continued, turning to Fitzwarren, "will go with me."

"Yes," was the reply, "I go to redeem my pledge—that pledge which you thought was a denunciation. You shall stand before these people in your true character."

"Then," said I, "we take the boat to Blakely."

"And I," said Tom, "must find one for Montgomery. So, gentlemen—

" 'Health and high fortune, till we meet,
And then—what pleases Heaven' "

Chapter Thirty-first.

A FEW days more saw us in that beautiful flowery retreat, where love had first dawned on me. Mr. Bently received us most cordially, but I was not satisfied yet.

"I have come, sir," said I to our host, as soon as the first salutations were over, "according to my promise, to lay before you the proofs of my innocence."

"They are not needed, Mr. Hopeton," was the reply. "I have found that your accuser is a lying scoundrel. This I have heard from more sources than one."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Bently, I do not wish that all my trouble—or rather my friend's trouble, for he arranged everything before I arrived at Galveston—should go for nothing. Besides, I do not want you to merely *think* I am innocent; you must *know* it."

"*I have come, sir,*" said Fitzwarren, "to show you that the man for whom I pledged myself is above the breath of suspicion. As for myself, I care not, only to prove that I am no liar—that I redeem my pledges. Think what else of me you like. Indeed, you can hardly judge too harshly of a——"

"Let us have this matter settled," said I, interrupting Fitzwarren hastily.

"I had much rather, gentlemen," said our host, "you would let it all pass."

But we would not hear to this.

"Well," said Mr. Bently, finally, "if you insist, let us go into the library."

We went and showed Mr. Bently the documents we had brought, with the nature of which the reader is already acquainted.

"I am perfectly satisfied," said he, when he had looked over them, "and since it is over, I believe I am glad you forced me to an examination. But let me once more offer an apology for the unjust suspicions I entertained concerning you, and my thoughtlessness in not giving you a hearing. Perhaps I was wrong, but neither of you is competent to judge me—none but the father of a daughter can be."

"That," said I, "is a consideration which had not before crossed my mind."

"Go with me into the drawing-room," said our host, leading the way out of the library.

We found Mrs. Bently and Helen. The former saluted us in an exceedingly friendly manner; the latter coldly and politely. How changed she was since the first time I saw her! She was pale and her eyes were constantly gazing on vacancy.

"Mrs. Bently and Helen," commenced Mr. Bently, "you both recollect that Mr. Lorraine—I ought rather to say, the villain Lorraine—told us some tales of the misdoings of Mr. Fitzwarren and Mr. Hopeton—particularly the latter. He supported the charges with evidence which appeared to me incontrovertible, and I told you to avoid these gentlemen as much as you could possibly do, without being guilty of impoliteness. I began, some time ago, to suspect that these gentlemen had been slandered, and lately I have heard so much against Lorraine, and I remembered that Mr. Hopeton and Mr. Fitzwarren had always acted honorably, I concluded to dismiss my suspicions against them.

"But they have taken the trouble to make a long journey, on purpose to obtain evidence with which to refute the slanders against them, and although I told them it was unnecessary, they insisted on laying it before me. Before Lorraine endeavored to lower them in our opinion, I and you looked on them as particular friends and perfect gentlemen. What I have to say now, is, I am fully satisfied that the allegations of Lorraine were totally false, and I hope

you will receive Mr. Hopeton and Mr. Fitzwarren again into favor as those who have laid us under particular obligations by their services to Frank."

The last-named gentleman had come in and stopped at the door, just long enough to hear the two concluding sentences.

"I thought, from the beginning, Lorraine lied," he said, coming forward and offering me his hand. "I would have told you all about it, Jack, but I knew Mr. Fitzwarren would right the matter if it could be done—at least I thought so—and father and I concluded the best course would be just to get out of the way till the thing was settled in some manner. Forgive me if I did wrong. But you don't know whether 'twas wrong or not, because you've got no sister."

"That is true, Frank," I answered, "and I begin to think you and your father acted just as I would have done under the same circumstances, and that there is nothing to be forgiven."

"And I hope Mr. Fitzwarren's judgment will be as lenient," said Frank, giving his hand to that gentleman.

"I think," answered Fitzwarren, "we—at least I—would have had no right to complain, had you never spoken to us again."

"Let me assure you both, gentlemen," said Mrs. Bently, "that I deeply regret this miserable understanding, and I hope that no recurrence to it will mar our future friendship."

"And I," said Helen, "never believed the slanders uttered against either of you, so I have no apologies to offer."

These words were uttered with a voice and manner perfectly polite, but oh, how cold ! I was astonished. If Helen had not credited the reports about me, what could be the reason of her reserve—nay rudeness—toward me ? "Perhaps," I thought, "she merely obeyed her parents." But why was she so cold now ? Of course, though, nothing was to be learned in the presence of others.

The day passed off and evening came—the soft twilight. After dining, and spending an hour or two in the drawing-room, we had all scattered, each one to pursue for a short time, the bent of his or her own inclination. Fitzwarren was in his room. I strolled back into the drawing room, and finding no one there, walked out on the colonnade. Helen Bently was sitting by a column, leaning slightly on the balustrade, motionless and silent, gazing toward the road.

I approached unnoticed, and standing beside her called her name in a low tone. She turned quickly, and I saw that she hastily brushed away a tear ; but immediately a cold, reserved expression came over her pale face, though I thought I could perceive that she was afraid to trust herself to speak.

"You are on the very spot," I said, "where I sat one night, after you had left me, musing, bewildered, intoxicated by the tones of your voice still lingering in my ears. It was the night of the first day I saw

you. It was the first time I had ever heard you sing. I recollect well, how I leaned over that balustrade, and wondered if I were not dreaming, and whether I had not been listening to some fairy in my sleep. And well do I remember that I asked myself 'is it possible for me to win her love?'

There was no reply. Helen sat making an effort to appear calm, but she was evidently under the influence of strong emotion. Whether this was favorable or unfavorable to me, I could not yet determine. I continued :

"Yonder," said I, pointing as I spoke—"can you see where we walked that evening?"

She bowed affirmatively.

"Then, first, the hope I had formed that you loved me, amounted to almost a certainty. Afterward you yourself murmured the word 'love,' and allowed me to consider you my affianced. What moments those were to me! How I 'lived' in that 'short hour!' How I revelled in the thought that I had won the affections of the peerless Helen Bently! Yet I almost fear to say 'Helen,' although you once permitted it. Perhaps I offend?"

Still there was no word uttered by my companion. It seemed as if there was a struggle going on, the evidence of which appeared in the agitation of her finely moulded features.

"Since then," I resumed, "*you* have changed. *I have remained the same.* I thought, at first, that the slanders of Lorraine were the cause of this

change in you, and however unjust I might consider it for you to condemn me unheard, and although I might think that if you loved me you ought to have informed me, at least, of these slanders, still I was happy in the belief, that when you were made sensible of their utter falsity, you would again—love me.

“But you say you never believed them; and now, even after the proof laid before your father, you still hold yourself aloof from me; and my earnest entreaty is, that you tell me the reason.”

And yet Helen replied not. If I had seen only aversion to me expressed in her countenance, pride would have come to my relief, and sealed my lips; but I believed—nay, I knew, my instinct told me—that something akin to the old feeling of love was mingled with the other, and a doubtful struggle was going on between these conflicting elements.

“O Helen!” I exclaimed, “*what* is the barrier between us? Your heart was *mine*—who has robbed me of this treasure? Let me know the worst.”

“This has lasted long enough,” she said, at length, speaking with forced calmness. “The interview is painful to me, and it cannot be pleasant to you. Let it be ended. Let us part in peace.”

“And will you give me *no* hint, *no* idea, of the cause of this estrangement?”

“None.”

“There is a cause? It is not a mere whim? Whims do not operate so suddenly as to induce a lady, in the short space of twelve hours, to so change

her opinion as to look with positive dislike upon one whom she loved."

"You are correct. But, Mr. Hopeton, let me beg of you not to prolong this interview. No good can come of it."

"By a positive command, you can banish me forever; but let me give you the reasons for my pertinacity, lest I seem a dangler, devoid of spirit. You and I once loved each other. Before my God, I know of *no reason* why it should be otherwise now. There is some obstacle in my way, which I could remove, if I only knew its nature. You have heard some other slander against me, and give it credit. Let me know what this is, and I will refute it. You yet love the Hopeton of your first imagination. It is only because you look at me as possessing a character different from what you first supposed to be mine, that you have withdrawn your favor. Could I convince you that I am still the same, I doubt not you would still love me."

"This *must* end, Mr. Hopeton," said Helen, rising. "Since you will not leave me, I must leave you. But first, to answer one of your questions. You ask me, 'who has robbed you of this treasure?—to let you know the worst.' What would be the worst for you, I know not; but the worst for me is, that my heart has returned to me, a homeless, disappointed wanderer—wounded, crushed—here to abide forever."

The next moment I was alone, as completely

mystified, bewildered a mortal as ever groped helplessly in the mazes of love. The reader will perceive the difficulty of my situation. I had stated the case precisely to Helen Bently. If I had thought that she had ceased to love me from any other cause than a misconception—indeed, had I believed that she had *entirely* ceased to love me from *any* cause, I would not have been so pertinacious. Entertaining the opinion I did, however, I felt as if it was my *duty* to try and find out the reason of this misunderstanding.

Even Helen's last words convinced me, more than ever, that her first love was not entirely gone; but they also convinced me that further effort on my part, to discover the cause of our estrangement, would be useless and humiliating.

I was left completely in the dark. Long while I sat, pondering, but at length my resolution was taken.

"I will forget all this," said I to myself, "or will remember it only as a pleasant dream. I will go *home*, and there enter on the duties of man's estate. Georgia has work for her sons to do, and I'll volunteer in her service. No more dallying with love for me. No more shall pleasure be my sole object in life. I will strive to make myself useful. The paths to distinction lie open before me. Why cannot I follow them successfully? Ambition shall prompt me. Fame shall be my idol now."

Supper was announced, and I went in. Since the

struggle was over with me, I was enabled to appear so calm, that no one, not even Fitzwarren, could perceive any traces of unusual excitement in my countenance. A cheerful conversation went on round the table, and I was taking my full share in it.

"By the way, Mr. Hopeton," said Mrs. Bently, suddenly, "I received a letter this evening from a friend in Georgia, and there is intelligence in it of a wedding, which is to come off on a magnificent scale."

"Ah!" said I, guessing what wedding she was talking off. "I must go home, as quickly as possible, and perhaps I may be invited to attend."

"Oh, my correspondent informs me that you are to be an attendant. Indeed, she says that the wedding has been postponed, on account of your absence."

"Indeed! And pray, Mrs. Bently, who are the parties?"

"Well, they will grace a magnificent fête as well as any couple I know, for they are magnificent-looking people. They are Mr. Charley Hampton—I believe you call him Uncle Charley. That fine looking, distingué, polite *gentleman*, in every sense of the word, Mr. Bently," said the lady, now speaking to her husband, "whom you, and Frank, and I, all liked so much, on such a short acquaintance."

"Digressive, like a woman," said Mr. Bently. "We are waiting to know who is the lady."

"Father thinks it unnecessary for you to praise the gentleman quite so warmly, mother," said Frank.

"Well, Mr. Bently may take my *role* now. The lady is Mrs. Holmes."

"It is my turn sure enough, now," said Mr. B., "for never have I seen a lady better calculated to lead men in silken fetters than Mrs. Holmes—except one."

"The exception is entirely unnecessary," said our hostess.

"But tell us if you know anything about it, Jack," said Frank Bently.

"Well," said I, "there is no use in keeping it a secret any longer. They were engaged when you saw them at Catoosa. They have loved each other for years."

"Are you *sure* of this, Mr. Hopeton?" asked Helen Bently, in a tone tremulous and strange.

"Certainly," was my reply. "Uncle Charley never conceals anything from me. Nor did Mrs. Holmes, last summer. She looks on me almost as a brother."

"And what in the world is the matter with you, Helen?" asked her father. "You speak as if you intended to forbid the bans. Did you, like your mother, fall in love with the accomplished Charley?"

"No, but I have been so entirely mistaken—"

"In what, Miss Helen?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing."

I looked at Helen, and caught her eye. It seemed to express something akin to contrition and returning love.

"Speaking of the lady's kindness for you," said

Frank Bently, "I thought 'twas rather tenderer in its nature, than between brother and sister."

My eyes were opened. Helen Bently, in common with her brother, had thought I was making love to Mrs. Holmes.

"Let me assure you, Frank," said I, speaking seriously, "that you are entirely mistaken. Whenever you saw me in earnest conversation with Mrs. Holmes, the subject was the man she so much admires and loves—Mr. Hampton. No other could interest her."

"Well," replied Frank, "the fact is, I was jesting, for I did not think you would fall in love with a lady older than yourself, however *lovable* she might be; but one night, I was passing alone through the ball-room, and overheard this same fellow Lorraine tell Helen that you and Mrs. Holmes were betrothed. I paid no attention to it, however. I concluded that you and the belle were merely carrying on a flirtation for the amusement of each.

"Did you hear that, brother?" asked Helen, faintly.

"Yes. You didn't believe the report, did you?"

"I must acknowledge," was the reply, in a still lower tone, "that I did."

I cannot explain exactly how it happened; but that night—it was almost as bright as day—Helen and I took a stroll through that most beautiful of all groves. Once more I clasped her hand, and again her eyes "looked love to eyes that spake again." Somehow,

all the dreams of ambition in which I had been indulging but an hour before, and all the plans of rendering myself useful in my native State, vanished, and I thought only of happiness in once more possessing the love of Helen Bently.

I will not weary my readers by telling them what I said to Helen, and how she replied. They have had enough of this recently. They can easily imagine what passed. A complete explanation and understanding was had, and from the very depths of despondency, I was suddenly elevated to the summit of felicity.

Even at that moment, though, I could not help moralizing on the sudden and unlooked-for shiftings and changes in the panorama of human existence. Life is composed of lights and shadows. At one moment the former brighten our horizon, and in the very next the latter overspread it with gloom.

Chapter Thirty-second.

A FEW more days found Fitzwarren and myself at Hopeton.

"Independent of the pleasure I have in seeing you as a guest, Mr. Fitzwarren," said my father, soon after our arrival, "I am glad to meet with you at this particular time, because I have business with you. You recollect Mr. Warlock, the old gentleman to

whose house we rode one day during your first visit here ?”

“ Very well,” was the reply.

“ He is dead, and has bequeathed a large property to you. I am named executor in his will, and wish to enter on my duties on an early day.”

“ I cannot understand why he should leave property to me, Mr. Hopeton—not that I deny the relationship, which by this time you probably know existed between us ; but I thought he hated me with a perfect hatred.”

“ Oh, he was very much changed before his death. But I have in my possession a confession which he placed in my hands, and this will give you all the information you need. From it you will learn some things of which you have been entirely ignorant, although you imagined yourself to be in the possession of all the facts in the case.”

So saying, my father produced a long manuscript, which he handed to Fitzwarren.

“ A great deal of this,” he said, “ is a narration of events with which you are already acquainted, and in which, indeed, you were an actor. Here, though, where I hold my finger, commences a tale which I think, will be entirely new to you.”

“ As this portion is not very long, Mr. Hopeton,” said Fitzwarren, “ I will just sit down by this window and read it.”

The extract, which soon absorbed completely and entirely Fitzwarren’s attention, was as follows :

“ Although I knew my nephew’s determined character, and was very sorry to see Jasper strike him—not that I was sorry to see him humiliated, to my shame be it spoken, but I feared the consequences of his anger—I was not prepared for what followed, and when I saw him stooping over Jasper’s body, twisting his dagger about in the wound, I was, for a moment, paralyzed, as were the rest. When we all started toward him, his father was ahead of us and, reaching his son, commenced striking him with a cane.

“ The infuriated boy turned and, after plunging his dagger to the hilt in my brother’s breast, fled. He was swifter of foot than any of us ; and the truth is, we were too frightened to follow him. We lifted poor David and carried him, along with Jasper’s dead body, into the house. He was still breathing, but we were convinced that he was mortally wounded, and, brute that I was, I already counted his property mine, since Warren would never dare to come back and claim it.

“ So sure was I that he would die, I did not hesitate to send for a physician. He came and on examining the wound, pronounced it to be a very dangerous, but not necessarily a mortal one.

“ ‘ With the good kind nursing which your brother will receive at your hands, and those of your family, Mr. Fitzwarren,’ said the worthy, unsuspecting physician, ‘ doubtless he will soon recover.’

“ ‘ And all my fine prospects will be marred,’

said I to myself. 'The good nursing shall be lacking.'

"That night—that night—Oh, God! It was a night which stamped the mark of Cain upon my brow! That night I sold myself to the enemy of souls, and since I have never known peace. I have endured a perpetual hell on earth. If that to which I am hastening is worse than this, what a future is before me!

"But let me particularize a little. The body of Jasper had been shrouded and laid out. I had loved him, if I ever loved any one, but now grief for his death was obscured by a stronger feeling which reigned in my bosom—disappointment, anger, that the prize I had imagined to be almost within my grasp, should now escape me. I was sitting in company with one or two others of my own family in the chamber where the corpse was. I did not want visitors in the house.

"In a room, not very far off, lay my poor, wounded brother, attended only by a negro. About midnight I went to this chamber and found the watcher and patient both asleep. The latter was breathing easily and quietly, evidently getting along well. I awakened the servant and sent him on some errand, which I knew would keep him a considerable length of time, saying that I would watch till his return.

"The negro left the room and I listened to his footsteps, echoing along the silent hall, till he passed out of the house. Then all was still. Not a sound was

audible, save the subdued and regular breathing of the ill-fated David. The shaded lamp threw a faint sickly light around the walls. The curtains of the bed intercepted this, and obscured the features of my sleeping brother. With a fell purpose I looked the door on the inside, and crept softly to the bedside.

“ If there is a special Providence, why did it not then interpose to prevent the crime of fratricide ? Why did not outraged Nature cause the earth to yawn and swallow up the monster, about to imbrue his hands in the blood of his unoffending brother ? But Providence interfered not, nor did the earth quake and open. A small cot stood beside the larger bed. Taking the mattress off this, I threw it across the face of the sleeping man and leaped upon it, stretching myself at full length and using the whole weight of my large person to smother the victim beneath.

“ When I recall the writhings, the agonizing moans of the feeble being, who struggled for life beneath my merciless pressure, I almost go mad. It is a mystery to me how I have been able to live so long under the accumulated weight of remorse which has long made my life a burden to me. But I cannot give the faintest idea of the horrors which reign in my bosom. That night I was more pitiless than the savage, and I did not rise from that bed until every motion had ceased, and my victim lay in the stillness of death.

“ Then I rose, arranged the bed-clothes, and placed the body in the same position it occupied when I sent

the negro from the room. I opened the door and looked out. No one was near.

"In the course of half an hour the attendant returned. Telling him that my brother was still resting well, and that he too might lie down to sleep, I left the room."

The document was long, and it is unnecessary to weary the reader with the whole of it. A minute account of the forging of a will, and of subsequent wanderings of the forgers, constituted a large part of it. Besides, it was filled with such keen self-reproaches, such wild wailings of despair, as only the most fearful remorse can give utterance to. It concluded with the following language:

"Mr. Hopeton, my tale is done. Now you have some idea of the wound which I told you had been festering for years within my breast. Are you astonished that I should exclaim 'Remorse! Remorse!'

"Remorse! The ancients believed there were two powers, or influences, or spirits, pervading the universe—the good and the bad. There may be a good spirit; there are a thousand bad ones, and they are far more potent than the one good. The latter is unable to preserve us from the machinations of the former. These are forever on the alert. Some of them tempt us poor, miserable, forsaken, helpless mortals to the commission of crime, and then there are others whose mission it is to torture and torment us—in this world giving us a foretaste of the horrors which are to seize upon our damned souls in the next.

Remorse is one of those whose office it is to punish. It is the harpy which has fed upon my breast for these many years. It is the minister which will wait on me in the moments of my last agony in this existence, and then follow me to where the means and appliances of torture are such, that the pain and anguish I have suffered here, will seem as nothing in comparison with what I must endure there."

"Then," said Fitzwarren, after he handed the paper back to my father, "then I am not a parricide. *This* guilt, at least, is not mine. If there is an Omniscient Being, he knows that I never was one in spirit, but I was enraged, mad, that blows should be inflicted on me by my own father for resenting so outrageous an insult. I did not wish to kill my poor, weak parent, unjust and unfeeling as his conduct was. Under the influence of blind anger I struck at him with my dagger, without thinking what the blow might produce. *Some* weight has been removed from my troubled breast."

"Jack," he continued, turning to me, "I believe there is hope that I may know happiness yet. Now that I have foregone it, I will tell you what has been my purpose for several years. Before I formed your acquaintance I had determined to commit suicide. You were a friend to me, and for the sake of your companionship I concluded to live. Then you fell in love with Helen Bently. I knew you would marry—her or some one else—and then I would be companionless again. I concluded to wait; to see you

made happy and then put an end to an existence which has been one long period of anguish and remorse. Since I find I am not altogether the unfortunate, guilty wretch I deemed myself, I have once more altered my plans."

"That is, Fitzwarren, you will not commit suicide?"

"That is what I mean, Jack. But when you get married, where do you intend to reside?"

"I don't know yet; but you are foot-loose and possessed of ample means; so, when I do locate, you must buy a plantation close by."

"That is the very thing I wish to do. It is just what I was going to propose."

"We are agreed on that point, then," said I. "Were you present, father," I asked, turning to him, "at Mr. Warlock's death?"

"No, Jack. He sent for me, but I arrived too late, and I am glad that I did, from the account I had of his death."

"It was unhappy, then."

"Awful! horrid!"

Chapter Thirty-third.

UNCLE CHARLEY heard that I had come home, and a day or two afterward he drove up to Hopeton.

"Well, young man," he said to me, "is it your supreme pleasure to perform that little service for me, now, or must I wait till you make the tour of Europe, before you will be at leisure to attend to the matter?"

"I am ready at a moment's warning, Uncle Charley," was my reply, "and very proud will I be to 'stand up' with such a couple as you and Mrs. Holmes."

"And Jack," said he, speaking earnestly and kindly, "Jack, my boy, how comes on your affair?"

"All right, Uncle Charley. We have plighted faith once more."

"Glad to hear it. Well, I am to be married on the twenty-eighth inst., so hold yourself in readiness."

The wedding came off at the appointed time. Uncle Charley and Mrs. Holmes both had considerable fondness for the magnificent, and the bridal party was a large one. All the splendor wealth could command was lavished on the occasion, and as I looked on the couple who stood up to be joined in the holy bonds of wedlock, I was certain that no finer-looking, more courtly gentleman, no more beautiful, noble-looking lady, could be produced. I thought, too, that, de-

spite their previous habits of flirtation, never were two people better calculated to make each other happy. Their eyes, whenever they met, spoke a language of mutual love and pride which it was impossible to mistake.

The next time I went to Bentwold, Helen consented to name a day for our nuptials. Of course she named a distant one—why is it that they always do? But I pleaded hard, and we finally settled on one within a reasonable length of time.

My wooing was happily over, and it was not very long before I went to Florida once more, to wed. A party of friends accompanied me from Georgia, and among them were Uncle Charley and his bride, Fitzwarren, Tom Harper, and Ed Morton. Miss Emma and Miss Kate Morgan also consented to go. A merry crowd we were. Of course Tom was in clover; Ed., good, kind-hearted fellow, is always happy. Fitzwarren was daily becoming more cheerful, and more humanized in every way.

I can't undertake to give a minute account of the wedding fete. It is not my forte. You recollect, reader, the description of the house and grounds at Bentwold—the groves and shrubbery. You have some idea of Florida climate. Well, just imagine that magnificent grove lighted up, almost with the brilliancy of day, save here and there an alley, or an arbor left half lighted, or nearly dark, for the accommodation of those who wished to indulge in whisperings too sacred for publicity; and everything arranged

for a splendid *fête champêtre* out-doors, while within the same good taste and elegance prevailed—just imagine all this, and you will have as clear an idea of the order of affairs on my wedding night, as I could give you, with the waste of quires of foolscap.

If the mere prospect of calling Helen Bently my own had made me proud and happy, the reader may well believe that the actual fruition of my hopes filled my cup of bliss full. But you can very readily imagine all my feelings. There is no use in going into ecstasies about the matter.

Chapter Thirty-fourth.

I LIVE about six miles from Hopeton. A little farther on is Bella Plaza, the residence of Charles Hampton, Esq. Fitzwarren is beautifying a place between the last mentioned house and Tom Harper's. Tom has lately brought home a beautiful bride—she was once Miss Kate Morgan—and I don't know a happier man. So here is a row of dear friends, strung out from Hopeton to Bridgewood.

The two Warlocks—or Fitzwarrens—Jake and Joe—after receiving their share of property, went out west.

Bill Gaunt is still living, and still imagines himself to be outlawed, when in fact all the people who wished to harm him are dead or have moved away.

Fitzwarren was at my house 'not long ago, and picked up a newspaper.

"Have you seen this, Jack?" he said, after reading a few moments, as he handed me the paper, pointing out a paragraph.

It gave an account of the hanging of one Lorraine, alias Fitzwarren, by a mob in California.

"It is best for us, Fitz," I said, after reading it, "that this should have happened. There is no danger in Jake and Joe. They have but little mind. Lorraine, though, was a man of intellect, and he would never have ceased his machinations."

"Oh, he had been effectually frightened off, Jack," was the reply. "He would never have troubled us again."

"Perhaps not. But away with unpleasant reminiscences. I heard something the other day which I fear is too good to be true—about my friend Fitzwarren."

"What was it, Jack?"

"That you had been paying very particular attention to Miss Emma Morton."

"You have heard truly, Jack. The object of this visit is to inform you that the sweet, pensive beauty has consented to be mine."

"You're a sly one, Fitzwarren. Why didn't you tell me something of what was going on?"

"Because, Jack," and for the first time in a good while, Fitzwarren's voice assumed the bitter tone so common to it when I first knew him, "Because I did

not know but my love would be *spurned*. Had that been the case, the secret should have died locked in my own breast—unless *she* had chosen to divulge it.”

“But she loves me my friend,” he continued, his face becoming radiant with happiness. “She loves me. Isn’t this happiness enough for a mortal?”

THE END.

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